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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Questions About Charters

Are charter schools the "last, best hope" for public education? Will they "break up the logjam" that has blocked school reform in the U.S. for over 20 years? That's what supporters say, but charter schools are, at best, a partial answer to the problems that afflict our schools.

About eleven states now have charter school legislation, and some 140 schools are up and running. Though the laws governing charters vary, all permit groups of people to set up new schools or retool existing ones. Charter schools are financed just like other public schools. The difference is that they are not under the authority of the school board or the central office. Depending on the state, people who run charter schools have the freedom to create their own curriculums; they can decide whom to hire and how to spend the school budget; and they can make most of the daily decisions about how to run their school. The idea is that releasing them from bureaucratic rules and regulations—and thus unleashing their creativity—will lead to innovative schools where learning will flourish. And, the theory goes, these new schools will rejuvenate public education.

This sounds terrific, but as I suggested last week, the do-your-own-thing curriculums that are a feature of charter schools are poorly suited to a mobile society where many kids attend several different schools in the course of their K-12 years. It's tough enough now for a teacher to adjust the curriculum so it suits the needs of two or three new students as well as the kids who have been there all along. What will happen when one of the youngsters transferring in has come from a school without walls, another from a school with a traditional curriculum and a third from an Afrocentric school? The basic premise of charter schools ensures that whatever common ground schools now share will disappear.

There are other problems, as well. Supporters of charter schools assure us that innovative curriculums and techniques and new ways of organizing the school day will make dramatic improvements in student achievement. But as long as there are few such schools, it will be hard to tell whether improvements are the result of innovations or a selected student body.



The do-your-own-thing curriculums that are a feature of charter schools are poorly suited to our mobile society.

Given the current enthusiasm for charters, a school that has not yet opened may have many more applicants than it has places. If these schools select their students according to criteria like grades, interviews and student and parent interest, they will be able to pick kids who are likely to do well—the way private schools do now. Even in states where the law requires charter schools to use a lottery to decide among applicants, self-selection will undoubtedly give charters highly motivated student bodies. It will not be remarkable if these kids achieve at high levels, even if a new school does nothing new or creative.

And what about the kids who are not motivated to apply to special schools where they will have a special learning experience? Will charter schools help us do a better job of educating *all* our students—which is what we must do if we are to salvage public education? Or are they an escape valve to keep those who are dissatisfied from deserting the system?

Charter schools also fail to solve a serious problem for teachers. Creating a new curriculum is not the same as making sure that teachers can teach it. The idea of freeing teachers from bureaucratic rules and regulations assumes that they will finally be able to do what they want in the classroom and that this freedom will make an enormous difference in the way they teach. I doubt it. Basically, teachers are already free. They are alone in their classrooms with the students. If they are not doing things differently or better, it is because they don't know how. And when you lift the rules, you are likely to get what you already have.

Teachers mostly teach the way their teachers taught them. Of course, they've had some methods classes and practice teaching, and the principal has poked his nose into class once a year and mumbled a few comments. But few have ever had the chance to discuss and analyze their work with colleagues—how to build a lesson or how to put across a particularly difficult concept.

Charter schools will do little or nothing to solve this basic problem. If you really want to change the quality of teaching, telling teachers to do their own thing—and making sure they are loaded down with the tasks associated with setting up a new school—is not the way to do it.

Charter schools allow a lot of scope for enthusiasm, but they will leave untouched many of the biggest problems facing our schools.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Go West

To the editors:

Michael Lewis rightly points out that writers on foreign affairs often make their cases with little attention to facts ("The Case Against 'Abroad,'" December 12, 1994). "The telling detail goes unreported because no detail is observed."

One need look no further than the first paragraph of Lewis's article to see this phenomenon at work. Lewis ridicules Rebecca West for her interest in international affairs when she says to her maid in a London hospital: "Switch on the telephone.... The King of Yugoslavia has been assassinated." He explains that this passage from *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* refers to June 1914 when Archduke Ferdinand was shot in Sarajevo by a Bosnian terrorist.

In fact, in 1914 there was no Yugoslavia, Franz Ferdinand was not king and few hospital rooms had telephones. The reference—on page 1 of a

book that Lewis claims has "haunted" him for fifteen years—is actually to October 1934, when King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French foreign minister were assassinated in Marseilles by a Croat Fascist, trained in Italy by Mussolini's goons. The event marked the beginning of Fascist aggression in Europe.

Perhaps Rebecca West understood something her maid didn't.

FAREED ZAKARIA

Managing Editor, Foreign Affairs
New York, New York

Metamessage

To the editors:

Whom to believe, Alan Wolfe or Deborah Tannen? I am equally fascinated by Tannen's theories and Wolfe's dismissal of them as unacademic and deceiving. In his critique ("She Just Doesn't Understand," December 12, 1994), Wolfe faults Tannen for emphasizing "the way we talk rather than what we say." Since, according to Tannen, men concentrate on literal meaning and women on "metamessages," that's just what you'd expect a man to say.

Tannen's message, I believe, is that

how we talk is as important as what we say (not more so), and it's about time men acknowledged that. Tannen's worldview does not preclude conflict, criticism or problems. Rather, it helps us understand behavior that, while instinctive, does not have to determine our lives. Thousands of Tannen's readers have gotten that message. Why hasn't Wolfe?

SCOTT D. MONROE

Alexandria, Virginia

Provincials

To the editors:

I'm not sure what was more offensive about Andrew Sullivan's account of the evening he spent in the company of myself and other writers for *The Modern Review*: his ingratitude for our hospitality or the ignorance with which he attacked us ("Some Speculation," Washington Diarist, December 12).

He was our guest for an evening that included a box at the Royal Festival Hall to see a stand-up comedian, followed by drinks and dinner at the Groucho Club, all paid for by Julie Burchill and "her set." We did not suspect that his response would be a scathing piece in which the comedian was described as "unfunny," the Groucho Club as "soon-to-be-passé" and the food as "bad."

He complained of "being lectured about the latest obscure offerings of American popular culture" by a group of "provincial" bores who "endlessly regale you with quotes from [*Pulp Fiction*] in the backs of cabs" (paid for by us, needless to say). *Pulp Fiction* "obscure"? Perhaps he hasn't opened a newspaper or a magazine in the past six months. Had he bothered to open the October-November issue of *The Modern Review* he would have noticed that, far from being "self-described 'Tarantinis,'" we gave the film a bad review.

He ridicules us for taking programs such as "Baywatch" seriously, as if we were primitive savages with no grasp of American culture. But "Baywatch" is the most popular television series in Europe, watched by hundreds of millions every week. It's surely more interesting to try to discover why this is than simply dismiss it as eye candy. American celebrities such as Pamela Anderson have an iconic velocity that their European equivalents can only marvel at. Sullivan may not regard this as worthy of serious analysis in *THE NEW REPUBLIC*—though he recently ran a cover story on David Letterman—but at *The Modern Review* we do.

TOBY YOUNG

Editor, *The Modern Review*
London, England

Citizenship—more than the Pledge of Allegiance?

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Nuance

To the editors:

TNR is big on nuance, and so it attacks Hilton Kramer (Notebook, December 26, 1994) for missing the "nuances" in Brent Staples's anything-but-nuanced diatribe against Leo Strauss on the editorial page of *The New York Times*. It is surprising, however, that TNR believes that one of these "nuances" was that Staples accused Strauss of "severe doubts about the Enlightenment project." What Staples said was that Strauss believed the Enlightenment caused the Holocaust. Who is having trouble with nuances?

TNR endorses Staples's accusation that Strauss harbored "anti-democratic sympathies." Maybe you wish to see these charges tried in front of a House Anti-Democratic Sympathies Committee. If so, perhaps Winston ("democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others") Churchill could join him in the dock. Strauss wrote that "we are not permitted to be flatterers of democracy precisely because we are friends and allies of democracy."

ABRAM N. SHULSKY
Alexandria, Virginia

Half-gainer

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley's complaint about "The GOP's Tax Scam" (December 12, 1994) is absolutely correct in every respect, as seen through the demand model he learned at the London School of Economics. Because Kinsley has been the purest and most aggressive opponent of capital gains tax cuts from the demand side, he has also been the most incorrect from the supply side.

In the supply model, economic growth occurs only when people put their surplus resources at risk, by investing in new enterprise. When the investment succeeds, growth occurs and the enterprise experiences a "capital gain." When it fails, no growth occurs.

By lowering the rate of tax on capital gain, the government invites more risk-taking. More investment occurs because the rewards to successful risk-taking increase. It allows individuals to take greater risks. If they make bad judgments they fail. If they make good judgments, they succeed.

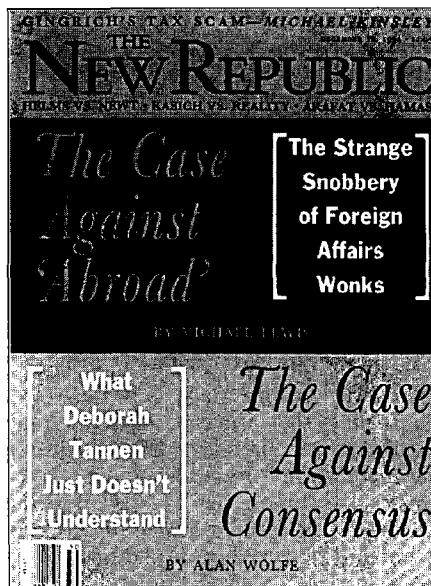
In the model Kinsley learned at the London School of Economics, risk-taking should not be entrusted to individuals, but should be the exclusive province of government. He describes all the horrors that occur when private initiatives are left to the whims of individuals. He sees no such problem when

government taxes away individual resources and "invests" them on behalf of the collective.

JUDE WANNISKI
Morristown, New Jersey

Michael Kinsley replies:

My argument was, in fact, a "supply-side" one: that the best tax policy in a free-market economy is based on the principle of neutrality. Taxes should affect economic decisions as little as possible, and therefore tax rates on different economic alternatives should be as similar as possible. All taxes do, of course, discourage the activity being taxed, be it work or saving or investment. That includes the tax on capital gains. But in urging special treatment for capital gains, it is Wanniski, not I, who is



expressing the belief that the government can allocate capital more wisely than private markets can.

This argument may be right or wrong, but Wanniski, in all his babble about "models," totally fails to deal with it.

And, by the way, I never attended the London School of Economics.

Without a prayer

To the editors:

Mickey Kaus makes a good point when he supports Clinton's position at least to consider the details of a moment-of-silence amendment ("Separation Anxiety," TRB, December 12, 1994). Such a public airing of the issues would be beneficial, but only because it would help demonstrate the unworkable quality of a voluntary moment of silence by raising the question of what such a moment would look like. Would silence be voluntary or required? Could kids

pray softly? If so, could others whisper to their friends? Would they sit, stand or kneel? Many Muslims pray on their knees; some people pray standing; others sit. Could those who wanted to stand or kneel do so while others sat? Would they have to bow their heads, an action many Jews are taught never to do, even in prayer? Would they be allowed to read? From a prayer book, Bible or Koran? What about a newspaper or comic book?

And who would decide these questions? The teacher, more interested in keeping a roomful of children quiet than in ensuring that participation is truly voluntary? The local school board, the target of grass-roots activism for the religious right bent on restoring family values? Or a populist Republican Congress, believing it has a mandate to implement its Contract with America? President Clinton was not wrong to ask what such a proposal would look like: ultimately, a single, universal act, moment or location would be impossible to define.

JOEL M. ROSELIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Bell bottoms

To the editors:

As a personal friend of Charles Murray's, I have watched with horrified fascination the demonization of his character. First came *The New York Times Magazine* with Charles Murray, the high-living roue. Then came Murray, the hate-filled bigot; Murray, the crazed scientist; and Murray, the political ideologue bent on destroying blacks on welfare. But Robert Wright's attack ("Dumb Bell," TRB, January 2) took the cake. Here was Charles Murray, intellectual necrophiliac, perverting the research of his dead co-author, Richard Herrnstein, to further his nefarious ends.

For four years Murray and Herrnstein lived inside each other's head while they wrote *The Bell Curve*, and to imply that Murray somehow didn't "get" what Herrnstein meant is nothing short of ridiculous. Murray may be "just" a political scientist, but he got his Ph.D. from MIT, which requires more than a nodding acquaintance with statistics.

PATRICIA BARBER
Keedysville, Maryland

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to less than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Waging bull

Hendrik Hertzberg once described Representative Richard Gephardt as looking like "an earthling whose body has been taken over by space aliens. [You] keep expecting him to reach under his chin and peel back that immobile, monochromatic, oddly smooth face to reveal the lizard beneath." In mid-December, this eerie visage appeared on the nation's televisions, calling for a middle-class tax cut. The cynical timing of Gephardt's speech (a few days before President Clinton's tax-cut talk) and its weary sound bites ("Newt Gingrich and his band of trickle-down terrorists") didn't play well with the press. The speech was typically dismissed as "class warfare," proof that congressional Democrats had failed to come to grips with the meaning of their November loss.

That's what I thought, too. Then I read the speech. Class warfare is not one of its major themes. Even "tax fairness," the staple Gephardt slogan of the Reagan years, is really only a footnote to the text. Gephardt has a larger point to make. Taken together with the pronouncements of Labor Secretary Robert Reich and with Clinton's Oval Office talk, the new minority leader's speech represents the ascendancy of a particular, potent analysis of American society that could guide the Democratic Party for years to come—perhaps to its doom.

Call it the Stagnant Wages thesis. "In the last twelve years," Gephardt asserts, "productivity has increased by 18 percent while real wages have dropped by more than 4 percent." Most Americans' "standard of living has slipped." Democrats "came to power in 1992 promising to reverse that slide but the fact is we didn't." That, Gephardt says, is why the Democrats lost. They can win power back if they can deliver on their original promise: "Our goal again should be a rising standard of living." Clinton agreed, declaring, "We have to raise incomes."

Is Gephardt's assertion about wages right? It's right enough. Economic growth has in recent years produced low

unemployment, but not rapidly rising wages. Meanwhile, the twenty-year trend toward economic inequality—the skilled making more, the unskilled making less—has continued apace. As a result, many workers, especially unskilled men, have seen large wage drops. According to Census statistics, the weekly earnings of a man smack in the middle of the wage distribution dropped about 15 percent between 1973 and 1992. There were compensating factors: fringe benefits increased, women's earnings rose and families got smaller. Still, "stagnation" is a fair description of the living standards of the bulk of the population.

Does that explain the 1994 vote? It's certainly a good reason why angry white male voters might have been so angry. But the Gingrich Republicans those voters elected didn't campaign by talking about stagnant wages. Gingrich talked about the "welfare state" and cultural collapse.

Gephardt and Reich glibly dismiss those issues—and the simmering resentment of affirmative action—as mere symptoms of the hidden stagnant-wage disease. The anger of the economy's "losers," Reich declares, is "easily manipulated.... Today the targets of rage are immigrants, welfare mothers.... Who will be the targets tomorrow?" According to Gephardt, "All the rage against government... is really just a diversion" from "the real problem... raising real incomes." Isn't it also possible that the voters' anger at welfare, government and reverse discrimination reflects reasonable complaints about welfare, government and reverse discrimination?

Still, raising living standards is surely a legitimate goal for any political party. The deeper problem with the Gephardt/Reich thesis is that the Democrats lack an obvious, compelling plan for achieving this goal. Gephardt admits as much, saying, "I don't have all the answers," promising "in the coming weeks" to lay out "some of the changes that must be made" (presumably in a speech timed to upstage Clinton's State of the Union address). It's clear, however, what the two leading Democratic strategies for wage-raising are.

First, training. This is Reich's preferred solution, and Clinton's. If skilled workers earn more, why not give skills to everyone? Unfortunately, not everyone can learn to be a computer technician, and the government's track record at boosting wages through training is decidedly mixed. Even a successful training program would take decades to produce significant changes in income distribution. Clinton's proposed tax deduction

for college education is especially ill-suited for leveling, since the deduction is worth more to well-off, higher-bracket taxpayers (and may have the perverse effect of allowing colleges to raise tuitions).

Gephardt's pet solution, meanwhile, is "a new program called Pay for Productivity." Through unspecified "special incentives" he will "encourage companies to let workers share in the profits." Profit-sharing might well boost incomes at the bottom—but again, how big will the effect be? According to Douglas Kruse, a Rutgers University economist who published a comprehensive study of the subject, profit-sharing plans seem to produce a one-time productivity increase averaging 4 or 5 percent. That's a sizable gain (it would dwarf Clinton's \$500 tax cuts). But even if that gain were achieved nationwide and returned in equal shares to low-level workers, it would only make up for a fraction of the decline in wages since 1973.

There are other possible cures for income stagnation. The recovery, if it continues long enough, might finally deliver higher wages. Or, as economist Paul Krugman suggests, a "technical fix"—say, computers delivering a giant productivity increase—might "appear spontaneously, independent of government policy." (Krugman thinks there is a "high probability" this will happen.) Let's hope. But it could be that our current stage of capitalism generates such unequal incomes that only those at the top see big income gains from economic growth—and that there's nothing Democrats can do about it.

When I was "counterculture" in the '60s, my neo-Marxist professors speculated that capitalism would simply collapse if it could not promise continual increases in living standards. Why else would anyone do all those alienating jobs? "Breakdown theory," we called it. Gephardt, too, seems to believe that to survive we must be able to promise "a high and rising standard of living" to everyone.

The alternative is figuring out how to live, if necessary, with income stagnation. That means satisfying the legitimate non-economic concerns of "angry white males" about welfare and affirmative action. It means building up common public institutions (schools, national service) so incomes don't matter as much. And it means learning a lesson from the counterculture: that money, ultimately, is not what is most important about America.

MICKEY KAUS

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. KARADŽIĆ

"One of the rare chances to let the world know the truth": this was what Jimmy Carter promised Radovan Karadžić last week. The abasement took even our breath away. And there was more. "I cannot dispute your statement that the American public has had primarily one side of the story," the mad dove of Plains told the mad hawk of Pale. The difference between the men paled before the similarity. They were collaborators in evil; and when, in a few weeks or a few months, the genocide in Bosnia finally pays off, and a Greater Serbia finally is brought into being, a statue of the vain, meddling, amoral American fool should stand in its every ethnically cleansed square.

Jimmy Carter's reputation for idealism has been one of the great swindles of American politics for two decades. In fact, he is the man in his time who will have done most to damage the prestige of idealism, and the prestige of peace. For peace is never lasting or true when it is based on the belief that there is nothing worse than war; but that is Carter's belief. He practices "conflict resolution," a contentless approach to conflict, for which all parties in all conflicts are like all parties in all conflicts, and there are no conflicts that cannot be fairly ended by compromise. It is the gospel of reasonableness, which is, as the Carter presidency demonstrated, a hapless foundation for foreign policy. And since the world is not reasonable, the world must be misdescribed, as Carter misdescribed "the truth" about the Balkans. Be reasonable, Carter says to the butcher of Sarajevo, as he said to the butcher of Hama; and they, assuring themselves that they have Sarajevo and Hama in their power, are glad to oblige. He provides tyrants with the thing that tyranny cannot provide, which is legitimacy. He brings them even a little pathos, as he sees into the hearts of men who have no hearts.

Sitting between Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić,

that is, at the most dishonorable table in the Western world, Jimmy Carter secured from them, according to press reports, the reopening of Sarajevo's airport, "a cease-fire leading to the complete cessation of hostilities," the free movement of aid convoys, "full protection of human rights" and freedom for all people in the region "regardless of age, sex or ethnic origin to choose where they wish to live." This is an indecent farce. There is no promise that the Bosnian Serbs made to their turtle-necked, brow-furrowed, return-ticketed stooge that they have not made before, and broken. He is elated that they agree to take another look at the "Contact Group" plan, when that plan, as Albert Wohlstetter showed in these pages last summer, is a blueprint for a Greater Serbia. He entertains their plan for a partition of Sarajevo, which they call "the sacrifices around Sarajevo." He talks human rights with them!

But Carter is not alone to blame for his mission. He is, after all, a former president. There is, after all, a current president. Why can't the current president tell the former president to stay the hell out of American foreign policy? The question, alas, is a rhetorical one. The whole country knows the answer. It is that Bill Clinton lacks a spine. This has been especially the case in foreign policy, and especially the case in Bosnian policy. He cannot stand up to Carter, and we are expecting him to stand up to Karadžić. To be sure, his press secretary was quick to "distance" the administration from Carter's analysis of "the truth" by insisting that the Bosnian Serbs are the "aggressors"; but it has been only a few weeks since his national security adviser called the same aggression a "civil war." (And where is Al Gore?)

Here is "the truth." Carter is a menace. Clinton is a sap. Karadžić is a murderer. And unlike the menace and the sap, the murderer knows what he is doing. •



HOLIDAY NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT '94: Republicans gained control of the House and Senate for the first time in forty years. Health care was not reformed. O.J. Simpson was accused of killing his wife and a male companion. Sonny Bono was sent to Washington. Oliver North was not. California passed a resolution denying welfare and education to illegal immigrants. Nancy Kerrigan won the silver medal for skating. Tonya Harding did not. Haitians fled Haiti. Cubans fled Cuba. Jimmy Carter went to Bosnia. The Disney Corporation declined to build a history theme park in Virginia. John Wayne Bobbitt began a film career. James Bakker was released from prison. Woodstock was recycled. Kim Il Sung died. Jeffrey Dahmer was killed. Communists swept the Tibet elections. Joycelyn Elders was fired. Anna Quindlen quit her column. Nelson Mandela was elected president of South Africa.

Tony Bennett became cool. Ronald Reagan said he had Alzheimer's. Mario Cuomo was defeated. Tony Bennett became passé. Paula Jones accused the president of violating her civil rights. Francisco Duran fired twenty shots at the White House. The World Health Organization voted to destroy the last two repositories of the small-pox virus. Marcella Young of Kansas, dead since September 28, was elected Cherokee township clerk on November 8. Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres won the Nobel Peace Prize. Palau declared independence from the United States. Alison entered re-hab, Jeff and Matt broke up and D&D advertising was taken over. Baseball season was canceled. The British government began peace talks with the political wing of the IRA. New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna told Canadians to "take a Valium and stay calm." Aldrich Ames was sent to prison. Murray's book caused quite a schism. Jackie O they loved you mucho (not the case with Buttafuoco.) Kurt Cobain stopped singing 'bout that smell. And Richard Nixon went straight to hell.

NOT BLACK ENOUGH: *The Chicago Tribune* reports that Northwestern University Law School has refused to hire Maria Hylton, a law professor of black Cuban and Irish-Australian lineage. Her sin: she wasn't sufficiently black or liberal. Last fall Boston University offered tenure to Hylton, who was already tenured at DePaul University, and, to sweeten the offer, offered the same deal to her husband, one of only three black faculty members at Northwestern. In response, the dean of Northwestern proposed to hire Maria Hylton to entice her husband to stay. That's when the trouble began. Northwestern's only black female faculty member

wrote a three-page memo to her colleagues that the university shouldn't hire Hylton, arguing that "a person like Maria, whose parents are Australian and Cuban, should not be considered a black candidate.... Not all with dark skins are black." The memo also objected to Maria Hylton's "conservative" views: instead of being a minority activist, she had written a law review article

critical of family leave legislation. "Implicit in all this I think is that minorities who are not liberals are not 'minority' enough," Keith Hylton told the *Tribune*. Both of the Hyltons are leaving for Boston.



ESPRESSO IN THE EGGNOG, PLEASE:

Russia Awaits Gore

—*The Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1994
(Thanks to Colin Lingle, Seattle, Washington.)

Problems preceded air crash

—*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 16, 1994
(Thanks to Lawrence Carlin, Los Angeles, California.)

TERRORIST SOAP OPERA: More than 100 Israelis have been killed by Palestinian terrorists since the handshake of peace on September 13, 1993. Most recently, a rabbi was killed in a drive-by shooting in the West Bank and a 19-year-old female soldier was hacked to death in the old Israeli town of Afula. Only last week another soldier turned his car left instead of right and found himself in Ramallah. A mob was ready—a mob seems always ready—and he was stabbed for everyone in the international news media to see. Not that anyone was particularly shocked. But the scariest event was one in which no one was killed. On December 16, 1994 in Gaza, at least 25,000 Palestinians assembled for a celebration of the seventh anniversary of the Islamic extremist movement Hamas. Produced in the form of political theater, the extravaganza featured exhortations against any peace with Israel (not just this particular peace) and boys as young as 8 or 9 years old swore hysterical oaths “to murder the Jews.” The climax came with a skit about the Israeli soldier,

Nahshon Waxman, who had been kidnapped and then murdered by Hamas militants when their hideout was raided by the army. In the skit, Waxman was depicted as sobbing pathetically for his mother, “*ima, ima,*” and the crowd laughed. Then the kidnappers killed the Israeli soldiers, too. And the crowd cheered. But, also of course, that happened only in the skit. This is a political culture that believes its own epic lies, and a political culture that clearly does not want peace. Most Israelis prefer not to draw this conclusion; but time—and more terrorist murders—will sadly force them to it.

BUT ONLY IF THEY'RE MARRIED:

Bishop suggests lay female cardinals

—Associated Press

(Thanks to Tom Dressler, New Kingstown, Pennsylvania.)

MOVE OVER, BEN CHAVIS: The NAACP isn't the only progressive organization committing suicide these days. No sooner had the Republicans taken over in Washington than the gay movement's second biggest player, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, hired Melinda Paras as its executive director. According to *The Advocate*, Paras refused to condemn the 1989 killings in China's Tiananmen Square, citing potential links between the massacred pro-democracy protesters and the Khmer Rouge. Early in 1994, as a member of the San Francisco health commission, she held up an AIDS services contract with Catholic Charities

worth \$412,000 until the group proved that some of its staffers were gay. Paras is also dogged by her fair share of Chavis-style incompetence. In 1993 she resigned as an official of the Shanti Project, a San Francisco group that finds housing for people with AIDS, after sloppy accounting lost track of \$2.7 million in city funds. None of this counts for very much in the back-slapping world of professional activism—

Paras told *The Washington Blade* that she's a “political organizer full time”—but it should count for something among the country's millions of gay men and lesbians.

QUICK, NOTIFY THE SURGEON GENERAL:

LABOR STRIFE

Violence delays MacBlo job 2 weeks

—The Vancouver *Weekend Sun*, November 26, 1994

(Thanks—we think—to B. Stern, Madison, Wisconsin.)

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR: This is a double issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC and the magazine will not appear next week. The editors will spend their week off checking to see if they're in the Contract with America. •



THE FLAPJACK FILE

PORK COOKIES

By Douglas G. McGrath

Sunday, December 4, 1994

This might be the saddest week I've ever spent as a Secret Serviceman. Agent O'Hara called a special meeting and told us that since Secret Service agents are assigned to people on the basis of how powerful they are, I will now be the only agent stationed at the White House. The rest of the president's protection detail is being reassigned to *Speaker Gingrich*! "Doesn't this endanger the president?" I asked, shocked. O'Hara shook his head. "What could an assassin gain by killing Flapjack? It's redundant."

When I reported for duty, Mr. Steph and Mrs. Rodham-Flapjack were decorating the tree with ornaments Chelsea had made showing Mrs. Rodham-Flap's different hairstyles. They couldn't use them all because it was only a sixteen-foot tree.

Tuesday, December 6, 1994

After my shift today, I met Agent Searle at the A&B for a beer. I sure miss him! Flap's a nice guy and all, but there's only so much time I can talk about the New Covenant. Plus, I was dying to hear what it's like at the Gingrich offices. Searle was afraid to talk about it in public, but slipped me his report. Now I will copy down the best parts:

8:00 a.m.—Not much dif from working for Flap. Speaker ate a dozen donuts for breakfast and did the same pep-talk into the mirror: "Gray hair is sexy! Gray hair is sexy!"

9:35 a.m.—Dictated revisions of some novel he's writing into t. recorder: "Not only was Sherry's ambition naked, so was Sherry. She unclothed herself as she entered his office, undoing the back of her bra with her teeth—and to think she once doubted that being in the circus could teach her anything useful! She crawled toward him, purring and whimpering and once, when she got a splinter, yelping. She wanted this man because he had power, he *was* power, and like her, he was just mad for those Alvin Toffler books. 'Oh, Senator Ningrich,' she mewed, 'your hair looks like steel!'"

Speaker G. stopped and asked sharply, "What's that noise?" He stalked out to where Mrs. Scranton was typing up the fifth page of a list of constitutional amendments he had thought up last night trying to fall asleep. She was sitting next to a couple of the speaker's speechwriters who were smoking a bong and it was making her

cough. Speaker G. glared at her. His aide Mr. Blankley whispered, "Mrs. Scranton is allergic to smo—" Speaker G. said, "Put some leeches on her throat! That's what they did in the old days, so it must be good. If that doesn't work, try hanging her upside down from a tree branch and beating her on the back with a hoe. They used to do that, too. We've got to look everywhere for new ideas, especially the past! If she doesn't stop coughing, can her!"

Mr. Blankley winced. "Sir, it's Christmas."

"I see what you're saying," Speaker G. said, glancing at his speech, *The New Compassion*. "O.K. Get her to address my Christmas cards, *then* can her!"

Monday, December 12, 1994

A brick with a note threatening Flap's life was thrown through the east window, so a lot of the gang came back as reinforcements. But then Agent Askin recognized Senator Helms's handwriting and they all left.

Flap is trying everything to one-up the GOP. Today, he proposed canceling taxes and paying middle-class people to live here. "It may be bad for the deficit, but it'll really drop the unemployment rate!"

Flap looked out at Pennsylvania Avenue. Christmas in D.C. is beautiful, but there's the dark side, too: people with no place to go shuffled by, broken and freezing, carrying their possessions under their arms. "Look at them," Flap said. "Outside the system, rejected by society. We have failed them, though they are too stoic to admit it."

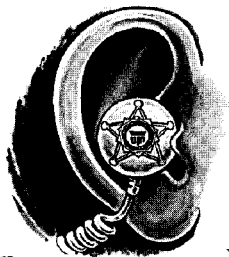
A heavy old man trudged by and flipped a finger at the window. Flap waved. "Goodbye, Speaker Foley! You're No. 1 with me, too! Bye, Jim—what a beautiful sparkler!" he said as Representative Cooper hurled a bottle with several pages of the health care proposal on fire inside. "Bye, Mrs. Rostenkowski! I'll always remember those pork cookies you made me! This touches me," he said, not noticing the ice ball she threw. "They still believe in me. I must honor their pain by being loyal to what we stand for." He shot a thumbs-up to the portrait of Truman that Mrs. Rodham-Flap had hung on the east wall. "As much as possible." He nodded at the Truman portrait Mr. Leon had hung on the west wall. "Let's push for tax cuts and prayer in the schools." When everyone gasped, he said, "Hey, it's not caving in if you do it before they make you!"

Everyone but Mr. Steph left in disgust. Flap put his head in his hands. Mr. Steph handed him a present and said, "Merry Christmas, Mr. President." Flap didn't seem to hear, so Mr. Steph repeated, "Merry Christmas, Mr. President." Flap looked up. A tear fell from his eye but got stuck halfway down in some relish that had dried on his cheek.

"Do you mean *me*?" he said in a cracked voice. "Oh, thank you, little George. Merry Christmas to you, too! I hope we can find our way back!"

He opened the present. It was a picture of Truman.

DOUGLAS G. McGRATH is a regular TNR contributor.



ON THE HILL

INSIDE THE BOX

By Fred Barnes

Check out the drawing on this page. What looks like a doodle is Newt Gingrich's legislative time line for 1995. (Yes, he really drew it.) It explains the breathtakingly simple strategy Republicans have adopted. When Congress convenes on January 4, Republicans are to start enacting their campaign promises detailed in the Contract with America: overhaul of Congress, spending cuts, tax breaks, balanced budget amendment, a new crime bill, welfare reform, etc. That's supposed to take 100 days, after which the Republican majority will concentrate on the budget and appropriations, angling to kill entire federal agencies. Then, Congress is slated to recess on August 4. Now, here's the key: the time line is actually a time box. And Gingrich's rule is, as he puts it, "Don't go outside the box." That means only issues in the Contract with America or ones involving spending will be considered. Abortion, school choice, school prayer—these split Republicans (along with everyone else) and will be put off until next fall or 1996.

That's the plan anyway. Enact the agenda that unites Republicans, declare success in meeting the GOP's promises from last fall's campaign and worry about divisive issues and fissures among Republicans later. Can Gingrich pull it off? My guess is yes, a lot of it at any rate. In the House, where he'll be speaker, there shouldn't be a problem. Gingrich has total control of House Republicans. The seventy-three newly elected Republicans are faithful acolytes. And most of the moderates are on board, too, having signed the contract last September. The Senate is more of a problem. The Republican edge (53-47) is narrow. But the few Republican moderates, whom Senate GOP Leader Bob Dole refers to as the "squishy seven," are comfortable with most of the Gingrich agenda, so long as Gingrich stays in the box.

Gingrich screwed up only once in the run-up to the new Congress. To assuage social conservatives, he

announced he would schedule a vote on a school prayer amendment by July 4. He went outside the box. This touched off a furor, reminding Gingrich why he had left social issues out of the Contract with America in the first place. His sidekick, majority leader-in-waiting Richard Armey, had urged him last summer to include the prayer amendment in the contract. An Oklahoma congressman, Ernest Istook, got fifty Republicans to petition Gingrich with the same plea. Gingrich spurned them all. Now, soon after promising a prayer vote, Gingrich realized how right he'd been. He decided, without announcing it, that the prayer vote won't come before the fall.

Aside from provoking the prayer flap, Gingrich was extraordinarily disciplined, as were other Republicans. The Contract with America had a lot to do with this. It was conceived by Gingrich chiefly as a campaign document for luring Perot voters. In truth, it turned out to be far more important as a governing document. Without it, says Gingrich, "we'd be arguing with everybody on every issue." There would be chaos among Republicans. But the contract provided them with an instant agenda that practically every congressional Republican had

pre-approved. It created post-election talking points. It gave them grounds for claiming a mandate. The reasoning goes like this. They'd proposed the contract. Democrats, especially President Clinton, had focused their campaign fire on it.

Republicans had won overwhelmingly. Ergo, the contract became a mandate, at least for spending cuts, tax cuts and a streamlined federal and congressional bureaucracy.

At best, it was a tenuous mandate—until President Clinton endorsed it. He didn't intend to do this. But the White House was panicked by the Republican takeover of Congress. Clinton, fearful of being left out of the game, couldn't hold off until his State of the Union address in late January. He proposed middle-class tax cuts ("the Middle-Class Bill of Rights") on December 15, then a \$24 billion package of spending cuts four days later. "He's validated the philosophical premise that we ought to cut taxes and spending," says Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour. "Now the argument is about how much. That's exactly where we want him." Why? Because once the White House bought into the agenda of tax and spending cuts—the GOP agenda—it became harder for Democrats on Capitol Hill to resist the deeper cuts Republicans will propose. And it became harder for Clinton to veto them.

Not that he wants to wage a veto war. Clinton's capitu-

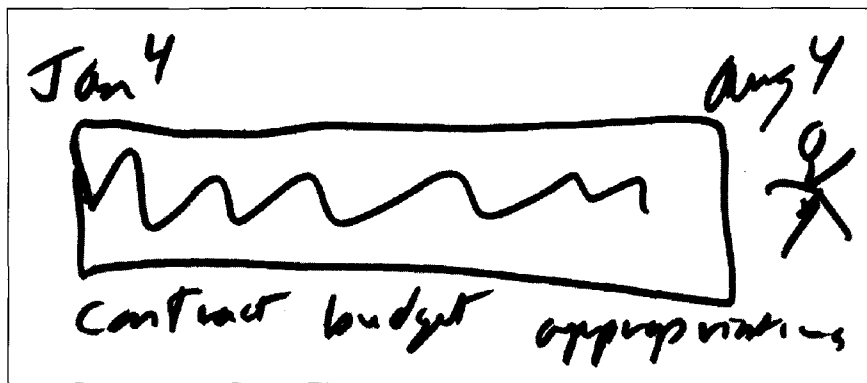


ILLUSTRATION BY NEWT GINGRICH FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

lation on taxes and spending brought joy to Gingrich for another reason. His job is easier if Clinton rejects the Truman strategy of fighting the Republican Congress. And for now, Clinton has. Instead, his nationally televised speech was close to a repudiation of his first two years in office. He devoted not a word to defending liberalism or activist government. True, he didn't offer any apology for his previous policies; White House aides argued in vain for him to make a brief mea culpa. But Clinton sounded conservative, even Newt-like. Then, when he announced specific spending reductions on December 19, he staged a kind of show trial at which department heads declared much of the work of their agencies to be superfluous. That's Gingrich's view exactly.

The president may have thought he'd trumped Republicans by insisting, in his T.V. speech, that all tax cuts should be matched by spending cuts. He hadn't. "I challenge the new Congress to work with me to enact the Middle-Class Bill of Rights without adding to the deficit and without any new cuts in Social Security or Medicare.... I won't support ideas that sound good but aren't paid for." Based on published comments by Gene Sperling, one of the president's economic advisers, GOP aides suspected days before that this would be Clinton's line, designed to make Republicans look reckless and profligate. On December 12 they had gathered for a weekly meeting at the Republican National Committee headquarters to discuss "communications strategy." One topic was paying for tax cuts. The next day, House GOP leaders were to take up the issue at their regular leadership meeting, but the session was called off because Gingrich had laryngitis. Aides began working out a plan on their own.

It comes in three parts. First, Republicans aim to chop the 1995 budget, which went into effect on October 1. Second, they'll go after spending cuts for 1996 and beyond. Only third will they pass tax cuts. The idea is to "bank" the savings, then dole out the money in tax breaks. The banking analogy comes from Representative John Kasich, who will be chairman of the House Budget Committee. He used it on "Meet the Press" on December 18, and not by accident. Two days earlier Haley Barbour had gathered the four House and Senate GOP chairmen slated to appear on the show. They got their stories straight. So when Bill Archer, who will head the House Ways and Means Committee, was asked if he'd pay for the tax cuts, he snapped, "You bet. We will cut spending first."

Planning isn't everything, but it helps. Gingrich has 1995 plotted precisely, including what House members will do during their three-week August recess ("one week for families, two weeks for constituents"). For more than a decade, Gingrich prodded Republicans to think only about becoming a majority. Now that they have, Gingrich wants them to act the role. He, for instance, doesn't respond to Clinton initiatives. That's what a minority party leader does. So when Clinton offered his spending cuts, Kasich issued the House GOP response. Gingrich didn't jump when asked about a possible debate with Vice President Al Gore, either. That, he said coolly, would be Arme'y's job. •

CONSUMED

BEDTIME BARBIE

By Ann Hulbert

Barbie is 35 this year and along with a special-edition vinyl reproduction of the original 1959 model, Mattel has launched a new Bedtime Barbie. Not a Barbie fan, I immediately imagined the worst (fuschia teddy...) and couldn't resist a classic parental shudder. Could there be a better symbolic indictment of juvenile consumer culture? Casting three decades of coyness aside, the fashion doll had, to judge by her name, finally exposed her disreputable origins. (Barbie was inspired by salacious Lilli, a German gag item for men.) The fact that "Bedtime Barbie" shared Christmas season pre-eminence with Mighty Morphin Power Rangers clinched the diagnosis of advanced decadence in the playroom.

But Bedtime Barbie, I discovered on my holiday shopping expedition to Toys "R" Us, is actually dressed like every little girl's grandmother. She wears a long fuzzy pink nightgown, with demure white lace at the throat and cuffs. The bigger surprise is the look of "the first soft body Barbie doll you can sleep with" underneath her nightwear. I peeked, eager to see (and feel) a cushiony version of the mighty bust. Bedtime Barbie turns out to be barely distinguishable from the refined-looking rag dolls every little girl's great-grandmother stitched delicate clothes for, except she has just a little extra stuffing above the waist.

The cuddly Barbie was a calming influence on me: suddenly the mid-'90s panic about dangerously mindless kid merchandise seemed like, well, panic. Even a couple of hours in a mass-market madhouse like Toys "R" Us didn't revive alarmism. Sure, there's too much of everything (15,000-20,000 kinds of toys on the shelves, out of a total market of 120,000). But just look at all the floor space devoted to wholesome sports equipment. Construction toys clutter the shelves. Kitchen play paraphernalia is made of the sturdiest plastic—not all of it pink. And the prices, as Toys "R" Us guarantees, can't be beat. As for the junk, I asked for Jibba Jabber, the most ludicrous sounding toy on the list of "hot" Christmas items from Toy Manufacturers of America Inc., the industry trade association. No salesperson had a clue of what I was talking about.

Above all, a cruise down the aisles undermined my



support for the favorite reform currently urged on American toy manufacturers: liberate girls from their doll ghetto and give them the kind of dynamic toy opportunities boys enjoy. A disproportionate share of the 5,000-6,000 new playthings introduced into the toy market every year are aimed, unfairly it is claimed, at boys. It is unfair—for the boys. Roughly 80 percent of those novelties are flops, or quick fizzles, and a glance at the crummy combat- and sci-fi-oriented miscellany makes clear why. If diversifying for girls means forsaking loyalty to Barbie and sturdy Little Tyke kitchens in order to flirt with faddish T.V. tie-in action figures—or, say, Doctor Dreadful Food and Drink Labs (serving up Monster Warts and Putrid Potions)—that's hardly progress.

On my way out, I finally found Jibba Jabber (\$12.99). Following the instructions, I grabbed the creature's long neck and shook it. Strangled burbling ensued. The perfect release for a parent after a hard day in toyland, but happily I didn't need it.

Not then. It was the trip to the opposite pole of kid consumer culture, Learningsmith, that was too much. All blond wood, warm lighting and soft carpets, the three-year-old educational toy store (now in twenty-five locations) has taken media-saturated recreation a step higher: here, the T.V. tie-ins have a college education. Learningsmith pays royalties to use PBS affiliate stations' call letters, gets credited as a sponsor for a few shows, and features program-related products among its several thousand items.

"A General Store for the Curious Mind," Learning-smith is a shrine to upscale pushiness. The products tout their high I.Q.s: "It's O.K. To Be Smart!" "To Get a Smart Start," "Creativity for Kids," "Kindle Creativity." Instead of aisles there are "discovery centers" with names like "Tower of Babel" (for flashcards, etc.) and "Socrates Sandbox" (for the preschool set). Computers are available, to make shopping an "interactive experience."

In a place like this the curious mind quickly turns off. "The Backyard," a CD-ROM computer game for ages 3-6 that is on Learningsmith's shelf of recommended items, is promoted as "a fun place to explore nature, map reading and more." Hey, why get dirty? For older children, Broderbund's Aesop's Fable, "Tortoise and the Hare," gets the seal of approval. This "Living Book version includes dozens of hilarious new twists. Along the way, you'll meet a score of delightfully animated characters—including Simon, the story-telling bird." He's purple, with red sneakers, and evidently loquacious. So much for aphoristic Aesop.

Creativity turns out to mean mostly creative packaging on the part of the manufacturer, designed to spare consumers any act of ingenuity or, for that matter, common sense. Why buy a \$5 hunk of modeling clay and spread out an old newspaper when for \$29 you can buy Claymation Clay Fun Pack? Inside the large, attractive box you'll find a modest lump of clay, a smaller attractive box to keep it in, a plastic workmat and a modeling tool.

Leaving Learningsmith, I was accosted by a large inflat-

able toy called The Scream, for \$27.95. Edvard Munch's figure, blown up, is fifty inches tall. "It's therapeutic," the label promises: "The Scream will be the one who understands you when no one else does." A swift punch didn't bring half the pleasure of throttling Jibba Jabber. •

GOMA POSTCARD

TUTSI ROLL

By Joshua Hammer

Dr. Jean-Baptiste Butera stood in the muddy road that bisects Katalé refugee camp in north-east Zaire, clutching a bulging Samsonite suitcase and a Sony shortwave radio. A portly, gray-bearded Hutu, wearing jeans and a handsome leather jacket, Butera fingered the gold chains around his neck and shook his head bitterly. Earlier that morning he had been roused from his home on the outskirts of Katalé by a squad of Zairian commandos. After burning his house and appropriating his Mercedes minivan, the troops warned him and dozens of other refugees that if they returned to the area they would be shot. "We thought the Zairians were on our side," he said. "But now we discover they are in league with the Rwandan Patriotic Front."

Butera is a member of the "social commission," a twelve-member gang of former Hutu officials that has run the Katalé camp as a fiefdom since the exodus from Rwanda in July. The raid by Zairian troops was part of a crackdown on Rwandan Mafiosi—many of whom live illegally outside the camps and prey on Zairians. The action signaled a change from the government's laissez-faire policy, which had jeopardized relief efforts.

Katalé (population 200,000) has chafed under the grip of the social commission and its paid enforcers, the *interahamwe* ("those who work together"), the youth wing of the late Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's extremist Hutu Party. The *interahamwe* is the group largely responsible for wielding the machetes against hundreds of thousands of Tutsis during last spring's genocide. Thirty thousand of these militiamen fled into Zaire, blending in with the peasant population. Initially, they kept a low profile, but in October they asserted themselves. In a three-day gang war fought with machetes and guns, the *interahamwe* mauled the young refugees hired by camp manager Care Canada to guard Katalé's warehouses. At least thirty of them vanished,



presumably murdered. Days later Care Canada withdrew from Katala after receiving anonymous death threats.

With the guards gone, 220 militiamen known as *La Jeunesse* (youth) gained sway in Katala. Their actions were said to be dictated by the social commission, including François Karera, the former governor of Kigali and an accused war criminal who has boasted that his militias slaughtered 60,000 Tutsis in the capital in retaliation for the assassination of Habyarimana. The militias siphoned food from the biweekly distributions and resold it at roadside markets outside Kigali. One-third of the camp's residents went hungry as a result. They intimidated and executed refugees who tried to cross into Rwanda. (Relief officials estimate that twenty Rwandans were murdered each week.) Their goal? To purchase weapons and ammunition for an assault against the Tutsi-led government; to keep Hutus in Zaire to deprive the new government of legitimacy.

When I visited Katala in early November—a sea of green and blue tents set on a baked plain of volcanic rubble roughly fifty miles north of Goma—the *interahamwe* was firmly in control. Minutes after arriving, I was surrounded by a gang of young men outside the U.N. compound. “There are no militiamen here,” insisted Aloys Muhaimana, a 24-year-old Hutu decked out in Ray-Bans and an orange Coca-Cola T-shirt. He and the others led me down Main Street, the heart of the militia's domain. (Katala has 477 bars, 136 restaurants, 202 shops, several brothels and a hotel—most of these cater to the *interahamwe*.) Inside bamboo huts, young men eyed me coolly as they downed bottles of Primus beer and ate skewered goat and beef; their affluence stood in contrast to the vast majority of refugees living beneath plastic sheeting nearby. “You can walk safely anywhere,” Muhaimana said. “We have no security problems in Katala.”

Other young men scoffed at relief workers' accusations that the *interahamwe* was stealing food. “That is a lie,” insisted one. “The problem is there is not enough food. The United Nations is minimizing the number of people here in order to give the government of Rwanda credibility.” But along the paved road that runs north of Katala, I saw markets piled high with Kenyan blankets, sacks of American-issued corn, high-protein biscuits, World Food Program palm oil—all labeled “NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED.”

As the militias solidified their control in November, tension in Katala and other camps grew. Relief agencies, which have injected millions of dollars into the camp, threatened to withdraw if security didn't improve. The U.N. Security Council debated sending a rapid-deployment force to Goma to wrest power from the *interahamwe*. Finally, Kinshasa authorities issued a decree to the governor of East Kivu province ordering that all refugees be removed from Zairian villages around Goma.

Then, on November 24, the area exploded in fighting between troops and the *interahamwe*. The catalyst was a robbery of a Zairian businessman just north of

Katala. Unpaid for months and undisciplined, Zairian commandos went on a rampage, looting, tearing down roadblocks, torching squatter huts, then turning their guns on the camp. A 14-year-old orphan was shot to death and eighteen Rwandan aid workers were wounded when troops raked the Care Australia orphanage in Katala. In all, twenty-four refugees died, seventy-seven were injured and 20,000 were ordered to relocate. The next day, thirty-seven *interahamwe* jailed in Goma were pushed across the border—directly into the hands of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. “In the beginning the Zairians said, ‘These Hutus are our brothers. We open our arms to them,’” remarked Jesper Jensen, a Danish field officer in Katala for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. “Now they're fed up.”

The day I met Dr. Butera—four days after the Zairian attack—Katala was a dramatically different place. The swaggering young men were conspicuously absent. Despite the brutality of the Zairians, most aid workers seemed pleased. “Since the commandos swept in, *La Jeunesse* has been very meek and cooperative. We hope it lasts,” said Jensen. “Some militiamen have even asked us, ‘When will the United Nations troops come in to assure our security?’” Outside the bullet-pocked Care Australia compound I came across Butera muttering about a secret protocol between the Tutsis and Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko. “The gorillas in Rwanda's parks are protected, but not us,” he moaned. He showed me his new home: a United Nations-issued tent pitched on a rocky plot. I nodded, thinking: he probably deserves a lot worse.

JOSHUA HAMMER is *Newsweek's* Nairobi bureau chief.

Making school fun.

THEME PARTY

By Hanna Rosin

“Dead as these dinosaurs.” That's how a cashier at New York's Museum of Natural History described what used to be a typical weekday afternoon. But since September, the occasional visitor has been jolted by the stream of 12-year-olds scampering by, their chatter echoing in the cavernous halls. These seventh-graders are students at the new Museum School, one of thirty-five theme-based high schools and middle schools to open in the past year as part of New York City's revolutionary experiment in reform. A few days each week, they lug their backpacks past a life-size herd of East African elephants, three droopy-eyed rhinos, a pack of

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hunting dogs and two scraggly ostriches to get to their makeshift classroom in the museum. After a brief lesson from a museum educator, they wander off to an exhibition—today it's the Royal Tombs of Sipan to perfect sketches for a history project—as the museum's wary guards look on.

The theme schools are the most important legacy of New York's last schools chancellor, Joseph Fernandez, who is more widely known for pushing condom machines and the infamous Rainbow Curriculum into public schools. While the first-grade lesbian primer *Heather Has Two Mommies* sparked a parents' revolt that culminated in the chancellor's ouster, the far more radical theme schools have prompted hardly a whisper. With a minimum of bureaucratic resistance, Fernandez launched a citywide school choice program, and then enriched it with the thirty-five offbeat institutions, where traditional classroom pedagogy is supplemented (not replaced) by less orthodox methods of learning. These include the School for the Physical City, where students spend at least one day a week roaming the boroughs—from Central Park to the Brooklyn Bridge—to study New York's infrastructure; the Choir Academy of Harlem, where kids sing for their A's; and El Puente Academy, where, between biology lessons, students launch immunization drives in impoverished Williamsburg. This year the city announced plans to add another thirty-five theme schools by 1997, with the help of a \$50 million Annenberg Foundation grant.

Are treats such as days at the museum empty calories, or do theme schools provide real educational nutrients? Pupils are indeed fed the basics; it's the presentation that's more exciting. The reformers, adopting ideas that have been dribbling down from universities (interdisciplinary or multicultural studies, for example), found a way to mask the required subjects in new packaging. At the Museum School, teachers work with museum educators to design seven-week programs related to different exhibitions. The most recent program centered on River Valleys, taught through the Sipan exhibit—a collection of objects from the Moche, a pre-Inca civilization of northern Peru. To avoid stale math exercises on coordinate points, the children simulate an archaeological dig by planting photos of the objects in a sandbox, and then map their discoveries on a grid. For a science lesson on metallurgy, they produce crude copies of jewelry from the exhibition. In humanities class, they study creation myths of the Sipan, then write their own. Off-theme subjects—cell biology or American poetry—are taught twice a week in regular classes at a schoolhouse.

Some schools unabashedly foster a political identity. At the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, two mottos guide the curriculum: "remembering where people come from," and "giving back to the community." The school was launched by a local Latino organization of the same name (meaning "the bridge"). Classes are held in the organization's building, and the curriculum reads like the group's

manifesto. A typical semester's schedule revolves around community activism. Last year a group of students calling themselves Toxic Avengers protested the building of an incinerator at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the storage of radioactive waste near the school. In one science lesson, they mastered the effect of toxins on the respiratory system. For a humanities project, they interviewed people harmed by the toxins and filmed a documentary. "It is just not enough to do critical thinking," says the school's director, Frances Lucerna. "They need to be able to go out and make some changes."

While there's nothing wrong with schools promoting political citizenship, El Puente's mission seems closer to indoctrination. This is partly an unavoidable consequence of a central tenet that drives the theme school movement: community-based education. Sixteen of the new schools were chosen in a contest sponsored by the Fund for the City of New York, a non-profit organization that finances community initiatives. More than 300 proposals, written by everyone from a group of black aviators to the head of the Port Authority to priests, union leaders and parents, poured in. "There was very little educational jargon," says Naomi Barber, educational director at the fund. "We let the communities speak for themselves, so no two schools look the same."

The schools may not look the same, but the children each school produces probably will. The generous impulse to let a thousand flowers bloom reaps the unfortunate consequence of uniform crops in each field. By making the community the horizon, whether it's Harlem or the world of curators, schools run the risk of cutting off their students from the world beyond. When you add identity politics to the mix, you can create solipsistic souls. Consider this award-winning essay posted on the bulletin board of Harlem's Thurgood Marshall School for Social Change:

All of my life I've been reading and I've never liked it, it was too boring, but now when I write my own autobiographies and stories and read them it's not so boring. I can't stand poetry and novels, I really like autobiographies, or creative writing about me and my experiences.

Last year the school produced a book of poems called *I Am*. Almost every verse betrayed a single identity between the children's sense of self and their surroundings: "I am a gentleman/I am a proud black child/I am an intelligent man/I wish I knew why people fight/I wish I knew why people are racist/I wish I knew why blacks were treated differently." The El Puente Academy codifies this impulse. "We work in circles," said one teacher. "We work on the self first, then self-esteem, then community, then world. The years are divided that way. . . . So, by twelfth grade, many of these young people will be focused on learning about the world."

Many educators consider twelfth grade a little late to start expanding horizons. An opposing group driving school reform is the Coalition of Essential Schools, led by MacArthur grant genius Debbie Meier and Brown University Education Professor TheodoreSizer. Rather than content-based reform, they focus on teaching and

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critical thinking. The high school they opened in 1985, Central Park East, became the beacon of the reform movement. Eighty percent of its students graduate and 86 percent of those go to college; and white middle-class parents from the Upper West Side beat down doors to get kids accepted. "My general feeling is that telling people to make up their minds what they're interested in is inherently unwise," says Sizer. "I've seen too many youngsters come in as quarterbacks and by 17 they're flutists.... You may unwittingly shut off a great talent that hasn't emerged yet."

But it seems picayune to fault theme schools on theoretical grounds given their record so far. They've held attendance rates up around 95 percent; compare that to the city's average of 85 percent, which leaves about 40,000 teenagers roaming the streets. Themes keep students in school, if only because they decide to be there. With the new school choice program, kids can apply to any city school, and then are selected via lottery or interview. Also, each kid gets more individual attention than he or she would otherwise; the schools admit 300 to 700 students spread out over six grades, compared to about 3,000 in an average four-year high school in the city (schools in the most overcrowded districts pack in up to 5,000). With class sizes pushing forty and horror stories of teachers using bathrooms for extra space, it's no surprise that children are falling through the cracks. At best, 57 percent of the city's high school students graduate. It's unlikely theme school kids will meet the same fate; their principal knows each of their names, and so far, 70 percent of them have passed their classes.

El Puente is a particularly striking success story. In the local Eastern District High School, a meager 12 percent of students graduated. While El Puente is only in its second year, its students are bound to fare better. They scored far higher on reading competency tests than the students at local schools, and 100 percent passed their classes. This may sound suspiciously high, until you learn that students who are falling behind receive intensive after-school tutoring. And they are not just graded on their gusto at vaccination drives; part of what drives headmaster Lucerna is the "failure of Latinos to excel in basic math and science," so students are forced to master the building blocks. The school also offers other extras: roofs don't leak; windows shut; and kids have the luxury of spacious rooms and neat desks. The true verdict, of course, will come in a few years, when students have to submit to statewide and college entrance exams.

Even advocates will admit that themes are best as a hook to draw in kids; the rest is up to the teachers. The Environmental School in Upper Manhattan, one of the few scattered theme schools to open before Fernandez's experiment, is a reassuring model. The school's founder, Coleman Genn, chose the theme because "back then the environment was a hot topic and it was easy to get funding." Now, all that's left of the theme is an environmental science class and a few school outings. But the school outshines others in the district, mainly because of the teachers' enthusiasm. By

their own initiative, they secured private grants for extras like a roof garden and a librarian. The walls aren't standard-issue drab green, but striped in bright blue, red, purple and green, thanks to a donation from Estée Lauder. Their enthusiasm spreads; students consistently outscore their peers in statewide exams. The ultimate test for theme schools will be whether ten years from now, teachers can maintain the high that comes from launching a new project, and inspire their students to continue to achieve even after they're gone. •

A nice Catholic girl confesses.

MY SO-CALLED FAITH

By Jennifer Bradley

My mother thinks I am a good Catholic. She doesn't have to remind me to go to Mass on Holy Days of Obligation. She knows that my sturdy Catholic morality has kept me un-pregnant and un-diseased and that's all she cares to know about sex and this single girl. She is pleased that I am keeping the faith. And I am keeping it, but in a feeble fashion. Friends ask if I am a devout Catholic and I say, well, no. I'm dutiful. I wake up on Sunday mornings, oil away the makeup smudges, wash the smell of Saturday night out of my hair and go to church. But I can't lay claim to devotion, and it's not for the standard reasons. Many adults who were raised as Catholics feel alienated because of what they know about the Catholic Church: its position on abortion, birth control, premarital sex, divorce, women priests—the usual catalog. I feel alienated because of what I don't know about Catholicism.

I went to Catholic school until I was 10. We had religion class daily, Mass every Wednesday morning. I could recite the sacraments, the vestments, the commandments (I still can). But elementary schoolers don't address theological intricacies. Jesus loved me; I should love my neighbor; don't say bad words. When I left Sacred Heart Catholic School for the pagan wilds of public junior high, I was as morally grounded as a 10-year-old needed to be. Then things went awry. Not because public school corrupted me, but because no one put difficult questions to me. Throughout my adolescence, priests and Sunday school teachers were trying so hard to entertain us, to keep Presbyterian ski trips from seducing us away from the fold, that they neglected to educate us.

I remember one teacher's desperate enthusiasm as he asked us every Sunday morning, "What does the Holy Spirit mean, today, in your life, in 1983?" We were sulky, sleepy 13-year-olds. We hadn't a clue. The Holy

Spirit was some warm fuzzy feeling, or an invisible avenger, the presence you invoked after saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son" and before concluding with "Amen." In high school it was worse. Church history, elementary theology, even basic Bible study was pre-empted by nuclear war or sex. The Church was against both.

Is it overdramatic to say that we are a lost generation of Catholics? I've asked Catholic friends about it. Those who went to parish schools, guided by stern, certain nuns, or to Catholic universities, challenged by less stern, but equally certain, theologians, know their stuff. They may have rejected the Church, but they thought about it first. Those of us who grew up in safe suburbs with safe public schools, or in Sunbelt cities where there was no Ursuline school for girls and no Jesuit school for boys, have a child's spirituality. True, Jesus said that to come to Him we should be like children, but no doubt he meant childish innocence, not childish ignorance. In certain ways, I am responsible for much of my own predicament. Though I have made space for aerobics classes, potluck dinners and "Northern Exposure" reruns, I manage only a bare hour a week for my faith. When I have tried to do more, I have found myself back in the environment of my teenage years: religion as group therapy, with a weird sexual tension that comes from young, eligible, demographically correct men and women talking about how to avoid sexual tension.

Or I have found worse. A couple of months ago I went to a seminar called "Catholic Dating in an Over-sexed World" at St. Matthew's Cathedral. The priest was chummy and cheerful and provided us with handouts. I squirmed a little when I read that "since men usually become aroused more quickly than women, the woman must be concerned with how he is reacting, not just how she herself is reacting." That was just the beginning. During the question-and-answer session, I referred to this paragraph and asked if, by this logic, I was responsible for the whistles, propositions and other ugliness I got from men when I went jogging. "It depends," the priest answered with a smirk. "How short are your shorts?"

I would have preferred to have been slapped. I have had occasion to come before God and acknowledge my sins, but I have never felt so worthless and dirty as I did then. The priest felt he had been quite clever and went on glibly about the importance of modest dress on women's part. After the lecture, my friend urged me to talk to the priest. He seemed puzzled when I said I couldn't easily distinguish his reasoning from the "women ask for rape" line of thought. He apologized, casually, for hurting my feelings. Three days later, getting dressed for Mass, I rejected two skirts as too short or too snug (these are skirts I've worn to job interviews).

What upset me most about this incident was not the stumbling sexism that permeated it but my inability to respond, to challenge him on his own—and my own—

ground of faith. My grasp of Church history and theology wasn't good enough to rebuff his negative view of women's wiles and men's helplessness, to confront him on the broader terrain of dissent within the Church. I once heard Cardinal O'Connor pronounce, "The Catholic Church is a hierarchy. You don't have to belong to a hierarchical church, but if you're Catholic, you do belong to one." End of discussion. I recoiled. There had to be more to say. Without dissent, institutions collapse under their own rotten weight. But I couldn't cite texts or marshal ideas to prove my point. My Catholicism of feeling, my ignorant, emotive Catholicism, rendered me mute.

I am trying to turn these awful experiences into constructive ones. Whether this reflects my optimism, resilience or a Catholic certainty that there is meaning in suffering, I can't say. Nor can I say whether it is perversion or paradox that every papal message that should drive me away from the Church pushes me closer to it by making me more determined to find reasons to resist, based in Catholic teaching. My faith is in the tradition of respectful dissent that I know is somewhere within—at the heart—of this Church. I won't walk away. I would ache at the loss of quotidian Catholicism: Lenten fasts, Advent wreaths, those quirky Holy Days of Obligation. I would also lose one of the few traditions that I possess. My family has no old stories, no customs carried over from Lithuania, Poland or Ireland. Just this tenacious hold on Catholicism. And for all my ignorance of its intricacies, it orders my life. It has shaped, if not sharpened, my worldview. I can't reject it blindly. I can't accept it blindly, either. •

THE PRESS

BARBED WIRED

By Gary Chapman

The splashes of Day-Glo pink you've seen on coffee tables these days probably belong to *Wired*, the self-appointed oracle of the digital counterculture. *Wired* promises entry into the esoteric world of hackers, virtual reality dreamers, net surfers, multimedia computer artists, cyberpunk writers, alternative musicians and various other proselytes who understand that network fluency is practically essential in urban social circles. According to its publisher and founder, Louis Rossetto, "*Wired* is about the most powerful people on the planet today—the Digital Generation.... The Digital Revolution is whipping through our lives like a Bengali typhoon—while

the mainstream media is still groping for the snooze button."

The magazine has met with incredible success. In less than two years, *Wired* has built an enviable circulation of almost 100,000. In profiles, it is always breathlessly described as "hot," "cool," "cutting edge," "hip." Its hyperkinetic and brazen layout, which frequently seems deliberately unreadable, is influencing magazine design the way MTV changed television commercials. The trends it covers are grist for catch-up stories in *Newsweek*, *Time*, network news and newspapers across the country. Perhaps most important, *Wired* has grabbed advertising's El Dorado: the cohort of young, affluent, urban technophiles who crave the latest and the best of everything.

Wired is significant not only because of the buzz it has created. It is the first successful publication to address the social and cultural effects of digital information technologies, as opposed to the technical details of machines and software. Clearly these technologies are reshaping society and they've become central features of many daily lives. But this worthy premise for a magazine has been spoiled by *Wired*'s fevered, adolescent consumerism, its proud display of empty thoughts from a parade of smoke-shoveling celebrity pundits, its smug disengagement from the thorny problems facing postindustrial societies and, most annoyingly, by its over-the-top narcissism. If this is the revolution, do we really want to be part of it?

The digital generation that *Wired* has identified, courted and helped shape is one that seems to have grown up without any civic obligations or significant hardships. The clean, risk- and boundary-free world of cyberspace is as much home to these people as any physical community. College students today are introduced to the imperative of acquiring computer skills the minute they arrive on campus, and many of them never log off to see another side of life. Moreover, in an economy that offers fewer and fewer meaningful or rewarding jobs for people of any background, the ubiquitous hype about the coming information superhighway is bound to snow a lot of smart young Americans. Finally, with humanities academics mired in fatuous and opaque theoretical debates, many college graduates enter the world of work with few critical abilities.

What often fills this vacuum is a passion for pop artifacts, trivia, jargon, crackpot ideas and superfluous gadgets, all of which are the stock-in-trade of *Wired*. Every issue of the magazine includes a section on new and expensive consumer products (appropriately labeled "Fetish"), guides to what's "in" and what's "out" (or what's "wired" and what's "tired"), and undergraduate-level opinion pieces under the pompous heading of "Idées Fortes." The intent, as Rossetto suggested, is to nurture an exclusive, "insider" lifestyle of urban high tech, much in the way Ralph

Lauren creates images for the rich. And, in the way that Polo clothes and furnishings symbolize the trappings of the ruling class, *Wired*'s package reinforces its claim that to read the magazine is to be part of a new culture of people who are destined to rule the world.

Such ambitions automatically generate many self-perceived enemies. *Wired* began with an "us against them" attitude, the "them" broadly conceived as any opponents to or slackers in the march to a bright digital future. Michael Crichton, in a *Wired* article adapted from a speech at the National Press Club, announced that the "American media," particularly *The New York Times*, will be "extinct" in ten years. *Wired* contributors are apoplectic about any government attempt to regulate telecommunications. A new term, "cybercrat," meaning someone in government building a power base on information policy issues, is now a vicious epithet. (*Wired* is an open hydrant of neologisms.) Big corporations are bad, unless they make computers or software or cool movies or are busy building computer networks. (Microsoft is an exception—it's bad because its software is invariably "tired" when it is released.) Anyone who expresses a hint of neo-Luddism is an arch-enemy or else just plain crazy.

When it comes to attacking the Clinton administration, *Wired* is on a par with *National Review* and *The American Spectator*. The magazine's second issue featured an article by British free marketer John Browning, titled "Euro-TechnoPork," lambasting the administration for its industrial policy tendencies, especially in high tech. Another article praised private schools over public schools. A recent essay by technical consultant Mark Stahlman continued the wail about industrial policy and sarcastically attributed to the Clinton administration a "War on Info-Poverty" and a plan for "Info-Stamps" to serve the poor. George Gilder, the neoconservative, anti-feminist who found God in micro-circuits, is a frequent presence. A fawning interview Gilder conducted with cable T.V. mogul John Malone, head of TCI, included Malone's suggestion that Clinton's chairman of the FCC, Reed Hundt, be "taken out and shot." *Wired*'s rather conventional free-market values are masked by its imitation of the '60s counterculture and by the magazine's appeal to hip youth. Although it hasn't yet commented on the results of the November election, the Newtoids on Capitol Hill—fans of high tech, the Grateful Dead and the Heritage Foundation—are clearly *Wired* material.

Wired's politics are firmly libertarian. But instead of backing a libertarianism aimed at social justice, *Wired* seems merely obsessed with protecting computer users from any interference in the use of their electronic toys. This agenda is attached to a loopy, almost messianic vision, built around popular myths of computer



entrepreneurship and an exaltation of gifted intelligence, of how the world will prosper in a new millennium characterized chiefly by digital communication and unbounded individual creativity. Gingrich guru Alvin Toffler, consulted by *Wired*'s editors in another dotting interview, rolled some logs with this observation: "The people reading *Wired* are children of this third wave of change. It is an entirely new civilization that is still in its infancy." As one of its standard opening quotes, printed in huge type on a background of wild computer graphics, *Wired* offered this blast from Ed Regis, a self-professed "extropian": "No ambition, however extravagant, no fantasy, however outlandish, can any longer be dismissed as crazy or impossible. This is the age when you can finally do it all. . . . Suddenly, technology has given us powers with which we can manipulate not only external reality—the physical world—but also, and much more portentously, ourselves." The extropians, by the way, are a high-tech human potential cult based in California.

Theodore Roszak, the historian who coined the term "counterculture," and who has aptly identified *Wired*'s themes as a "cult of information," points out that this attitude of technological omnipotence has a long tradition in American history. Technocracy, a fringe movement advocating rule by technical experts, attracted modest levels of public support during FDR's administration—sometimes you can still see the faded yin-yang signs of the technocratic movement on old barns and fences across the country. Buckminster Fuller, a forefather of the *Whole Earth Catalog* crowd that is now more or less married to *Wired*, once suggested with all seriousness that a glass dome be erected over Manhattan. Few people suggested this "visionary" was crazy—it was a technological fix and a new image for New York City that seemed to fit the space-age forms of the time. More recently we've had two administrations spend more than \$30 billion on a space-gadget solution to end the nuclear arms race.

If hyperbolic technological optimism were all that *Wired* represented, it would be a modestly interesting, if sometimes howlingly brainless, gazette of our times. Unfortunately, the magazine and its popularity among the young, urban elite also seem to represent something darker. *Wired*'s insider-outsider dichotomy has the taint of contempt for the poor and the uneducated, people not using computers now and not likely, in the close future, to find a reason to use them. The disadvantaged haunt *Wired* by their absence, like a negative space that can be seen but can't be accounted for. *Wired* frequently exhibits resentment toward any kind of civic obligation that might divert resources from life on the net. Stahlman, in his article, suggests that when global digital commerce removes any necessary attachment to a country, entrepreneurs may eventually decide that they don't want to pay taxes to support social programs. "What would a cyber age 'nation-state' look like (with 20 percent of its current tax revenue)?" he asks. We know the answer.

A retired IBM engineer, Ted Kircher of Austin, Texas, commented, "These guys don't think they live in a country—they live on the net, which is global. If the government does things they think get in the way of how they want to live on the net, they'll go somewhere else, like companies do now." This willful rootlessness and hyper-individualism do little to minimize the class polarization and segregation that have always plagued the United States.

A vision of a society populated with smart, skilled young people with their eyes glued to computer screens, pointlessly roaming over electronic networks, playing computer games, yakking with strangers, complaining about the government and about anything else that gets on their nerves—this is not a vision of a healthy nation. It's not even a particularly attractive or memorable life. Disengage, escape, watch a movie with cutting-edge special effects, that's the magazine's message. The happily colored virtual world, so much more congenial than the gray one outside, beckons. Thanks to *Wired*, you never have to go back.

GARY CHAPMAN is director of the 21st Century Project at the University of Texas, Austin.

The Brits vs. the Bosnians.

SLIMY LIMEYS

By Carole Hodge

"The great thing about it is that it's British," is how senior British Foreign Office Official Glynn Evans described it. She was referring to the concept of "protective support"—the term for the way United Nations forces in Bosnia are mandated merely to protect humanitarian aid. The term was coined by British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in August 1992. It was a concept, Evans proudly declared, "we then sold to some of our closest friends and allies."

This idea of protective support led to the proposal to provide armed escort for U.N. aid convoys in Bosnia. It was confirmed in U.N. Security Council Resolution 776 in September 1992, after which five mainly European infantry battalions were sent to Bosnia. All of this blocked the later alternative method of humanitarian relief—the American notion of air dropping food and medical supplies in combination with its "lift and strike" policy. The Europeans decried the U.S. plans as likely to aggravate the conflict and as inefficient in delivering aid. So became established the policy in which U.N. ground troops became merely guardians of humanitar-

ian relief, and in which the very presence of the troops prevented the world from stopping Serbian aggression.

Within a few months of the arrival of the U.N. Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia, the United States began to airdrop food and medical supplies to five East Bosnian enclaves, including Gorazde and Srebrenica, where the mainly Muslim population had been virtually cut off from the outside world for nearly a year. The United States had concluded that the aid dispensed by the U.N. in Bosnia had *not* been reaching those most in need, and that the lives of thousands of Bosnians were at risk. The airdrops policy was strongly condemned in Britain. Some suggested it could invoke the wrath of the Serbs, and reprisals. In a House of Commons debate that month, Hurd derided the U.S. conclusions about the efficacy of the U.N. aid distribution program: "Such ignorance of what has been happening warps the understanding of the public." He added, "Europe, with Britain in the lead, has for months been providing prompt relief, saving the lives of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, who would otherwise be dead."

The British government has used this claim to justify the presence of British troops on the ground in Bosnia over the past two years. The argument has defeated worldwide calls for tougher action to curb Serb aggression; it has been used to stop the Americans from lifting the arms embargo; and it has allowed Serb forces time to consolidate and extend their territorial gains. Few have bothered to ask a simple question: Is it true? How successful has the British-inspired aid strategy been?

It's clear from U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reports that the areas most at risk and in need of food, medicine and shelter—the "safe areas" of Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa and Bihać—are those that over the past two years consistently have received the *least* benefit from the U.N. relief program. All these areas are surrounded by Bosnian Serb forces who have held up, turned back or off-loaded for their own use supplies intended for the enclaves, backed by the Serb authorities. An October 1993 high commissioner report stated:

While UNHCR road convoys to and through Bosnian Serb-controlled areas have been circulating with minimal disruption, access to the Eastern Bosnia enclaves for vitally needed shelter and other winterization materials remains effectively blocked, with the Bosnian Serb authorities in practice insisting on reciprocity of assistance.

This situation hasn't changed. Take the contrast between Bihać, a Muslim enclave, and Banja Luka, a Bosnian Serb stronghold from where most non-Serbs, Muslims, Croats, Gypsies and others, have been expelled. The latest figures speak for themselves. According to the High Commissioner Information Notes of November 1994, the monthly food target for Banja Luka was 2,075 metric tons; the actual monthly delivery was 2,527. In contrast, the monthly food target for Bihać was 1,936 metric tons; the food delivery was 126. In the Eastern Bosnian enclaves, which have been converted into virtual open prison camps by the sur-

rounding Bosnian Serb forces, aid has been delivered at the price of many military concessions by the U.N. troops.

Records show that the amount of food and medicine by airdrops to the enclaves (February 28, 1993, to June 22, 1993) was more than 4,700 metric tons, as compared with road convoys over a longer period (November 25, 1992, to June 25, 1993) which brought in only 3,931 metric tons, suggesting that airdrops were, in many instances, not only politically less compromising but also more effective in feeding the population. The Americans, it turns out, were right all along. In Maglaj and Tesanj the population was kept alive by U.S. airdrops between October 1993 and late March 1994, with convoy access to the pocket possible only after Bosnian Serb forces pulled back from the Zepce-Maglaj route in March.

While it is true that the U.N. has effected delivery of large amounts of aid via convoys, much of this aid has gone either to the Serb-conquered territories—in Northern and Eastern Bosnia, and Eastern Herzegovina—or it has ended up in the hands of the militia at checkpoints, most of which are manned by Serb forces. The majority of aid by road convoy, accompanied by UNPROFOR, seems to have gone to the ethnic group that is the main aggressor in the conflict.

The U.N. defends itself by saying it is impartial and dispenses aid to both sides equally. Practically speaking, this means gross inequality. In Serb-occupied Bosnia, 30 percent of the population controls 70 percent of the land. In the Banja Luka area alone, an estimated half-million Muslims, Croats and others have been expelled from their homes. There were some 300,000 Muslim and Croats in Eastern Bosnia before 1992, compared with an estimated 4,000 today.

Moreover, the Serbs living in the areas conquered by the Bosnian Serb forces have several advantages over the non-Serbs who have fled mainly into the central belt of Bosnia. First, they have been relatively isolated from the conflict over the past two and a half years. The Serb populations of towns such as Prijedor, Foca, Bratunac, Zvornik, Rogatica, Visegrad, all of which had Muslim majorities before the war, are now living relatively peacefully, while enjoying the spoils—the homes, personal belongings, orchards, vineyards—of those who have been ethnically cleansed from the area, or murdered. They can go to work, go shopping or see friends, knowing they will not be shelled on the journey. They can plant for the spring harvest in the confidence that the fields will not be bombed. They can sleep knowing they will not be attacked or raped. Yet these are the people reaping the benefits of the U.N. convoys, while those in the areas besieged by Serb forces are denied food, clothing, shoes and seeds. According to the latest high commissioner report, "Some families are living in newspaper kiosks with scant protection from the cold." Maybe the British government will wish them a Merry Christmas.

CAROLE HODGE is a research associate at Glasgow University.

Can Ms. Alexander save the NEA?

JANE'S ADDICTION

By Dante Ramos

For years, conservatives have been railing against the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and now that the Republicans are running Congress, they may abolish it altogether. In the ongoing effort to paint the agency as the preserve of an effete clique of blasphemers, the NEA critics have in the past year targeted Jane Alexander, the 55-year-old actor who now heads the endowment. The Christian Action Network, a religious right group, dubbed Alexander one of the administration's "Four Horsewomen"—the Clinton appointees whose liberal politics are most offensive to Christian sensibilities. Yet it is precisely because of Alexander's political predilections that she is more likely than past chiefs to deliver the sort of NEA that even Jesse Helms should like: populist and fairly innocuous.

Alexander resembles her critics in one crucial way: no less than those who deplored Robert Mapplethorpe's homoeroticism or Andres Serrano's photograph *Piss Christ*, Alexander frequently judges art by its social implications. One of her favorite photographers is Patrick Nagatani, whose works deal with Asian Americans and the atomic bomb. Among painters, Alexander prefers Tabitha Vevers for her focus on explicitly feminist themes. Alexander calls her own early acting work avant-garde because it dealt with such inflammatory issues as interracial marriage.

At times, her left-wing, multicultural politics have put her at odds with the right. The first "decency" crisis of her tenure began in May after performance artist Ron Athey used \$150 in endowment funds to cut designs into another man's back. Conservative groups fumed, but Alexander defended the artist's independence in a statement that read, "Not all art is for everybody. I appreciate that some people would find this art difficult. Americans are not used to seeing bloodletting, except in films." Translation: get over it. Not everyone was pleased. In July the Senate voted to cut the unrepentant Alexander's budget by 5 percent. While the budget was in conference, Alexander visited West Virginia, home of Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Byrd. The trip did the trick. Alexander and the agency escaped with only a 2 percent reduction.

But, while the press plays up episodes such as the Athey grant, it's a different conflict that best defines Alexander's NEA: the decades-old struggle between arts elitists and populists. The endowment spends most of its \$167 million annual budget on grants to arts organi-

zations and individual artists. Elitists maintain that the money should flow to nationally recognized museums, orchestras, dance companies and so on. They argue that good art needn't be accessible to a wide public audience. Populists prefer regional institutions and educational programs. Alexander has sided strongly with the populists. She cites as her best accomplishment as NEA chief a fifty-state publicity tour; along the way, she dedicated a mural painted by children in Scottsdale, Arizona, convened a town meeting in Abilene, Texas, and toured an art museum in Brockton, Massachusetts.

In an interview, Alexander, generally careful and composed, defends her populism with passion. "I feel that the expression, be it of this little girl" (Alexander gestures toward a green and white block of clay atop her coffee table) "this 6-year-old girl named LeKeshia from Birmingham, Alabama, or of this older man" (she picks up and quickly puts down a small blue wooden ship) "who made this boat in Thibodaux or—this college student in Wyoming" (she points to a white pot) "all of it will be the expression, the expression—this fellow, he is already a professional, and he intends to make a career as a ceramicist." She takes a breath. "My point is, this is art for art's sake. It has its own reason for being." Alexander's position that all art is on some level equivalent has provoked criticism from more traditionalist quarters. *Partisan Review* Editor Edith Kurzweil accused Alexander of turning the agency into the "National Endowment for Arts and Crafts."

Still, both Washington conservatives and art-world elitists should at least appreciate that, as an administrator, Alexander has performed ably. Although she came to her job with Emmy and Tony awards but no previous government service, the balky Senate confirmed her unanimously. Comedian Robert Klein, who starred with Alexander in Wendy Wasserstein's play *The Sisters Rosensweig*, theorizes: "It's like, 'Hello, I'm not a doctor, but I play one on television.'... Not to take one thing away from my friend, but senators have such a fabulous opinion of her because they know of her as Eleanor Roosevelt [in the T.V. movie *Eleanor and Franklin*] or as a banker in *The Sisters Rosensweig*." Since Congress and the National Council on the Arts (the NEA's governing board) control the endowment's budgeting and its grants, it is hard for any NEA chief to point to concrete achievements. Yet by all accounts Alexander has improved the mood of the agency and the artists who depend upon it. And she has built a solid staff. Alexander picked a respected graphic designer as the design arts program director and the founder of the New York Chamber Symphony as the head of the music program.

On stage and in films, Alexander has always played characters who are intelligent, able, determined and earnest. As Klein says, audiences assume she isn't much different offstage. She isn't. "There's a seriousness about Jane that you can make fun of," Wasserstein says. After Alexander's last performance of *The Sisters Rosensweig*, the cast and pro-

continued on page 26



His Majesty Awaits The

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ducers celebrated at the restaurant Orso, where Alexander stood up and held forth for five or ten minutes. "[She was] talking about the play and then segueing into the theater and how important it was and what it meant," Wasserstein recalls.

Tina Howe, a playwright who has known Alexander since both were undergraduates at Sarah Lawrence College in the late 1950s, says her friend was no different then. "The thing that was most striking about Jane in college," Howe says, "was how determined she was to be an actress, when the rest of us were just playing in the sand." Alexander directed and starred in the first production of Howe's work. The play, Howe recalls, "was typical collegiate fare, with a doomed king and queen wandering around a garden and a pigeon who prophesied the apocalypse.... Jane was the one who said, 'Let's put this on!'"

Over time, Alexander developed an apocalypse fixation. Her opposition to nuclear weapons began in the late 1950s, when pediatrician Benjamin Spock publicized the presence in milk of strontium 90, a radioactive isotope released by atmospheric testing. "We marched to ban the bomb," she says. "That's what we did in those days.... I think it influenced Kennedy and Khrushchev sitting down together and banning atmospheric testing."

Popular outrage led to a 1963 test-ban treaty, and the protests' success made her a believer in grass-roots campaigns.

She admits she knew almost nothing about atomic weapons during the strontium 90 protests. Wary of being an entertainer who waxed indignant about issues she didn't understand, she schooled herself in the 1970s and '80s by reading and attending lectures. Alexander happened on a short story about survivors of a nuclear holocaust two years before it became the 1983 film *Testament*. One of her sons had read it in *Ms.* magazine and showed it to her; she then eagerly accepted the lead role in the movie. Like the ads she shot for the National Stroke Association, Alexander's no-nukes work illus-

trates her single-minded dedication to public causes.

It also suggests an uncritical sentimentalism that is hard to reconcile with high art. Is Alexander more inclined to sell the arts as a tool for social improvement than her predecessors were? "Absolutely!" she exclaims. In her travels she stresses the utility of art, and the idea seems to resonate: "ALEXANDER BRINGS MESSAGE OF THE ARTS' BALM FOR SOCIETY," reported the *Arizona Daily Star*. "ARTS TOUTED AS SOLUTION TO VIOLENCE, RACIAL STRIFE," trumpeted the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. "The arts do have those socially redeeming qualities, so why not emphasize them?" asks Roger Mandle, a member of the National

Council on the Arts and president of the Rhode Island School of Design.

That impulse can be pushed too far, though; there's a point where art gives way to social work. At a meeting of the National Council in August, Yvette Cantu, a Los Angeles elementary schoolteacher, described how her students benefited from a dance program funded indirectly by the NEA. She showed a video clip in which kids talked about dancing but didn't actually dance. "They can articulate which ways they want to personally grow in," Cantu reported. Her students had been able to write down their feelings about dance and then "to collaboratively put their efforts into the computer." Amid all

the feel-good talk, Alexander nodded quietly.

These programs have spread partly because they don't aggravate the agency's foes. On the record, arts organization leaders say their members fully support grants to "unsafe" pieces; off the record, they say that many artists want to avoid a ruckus and get on with their work. Lately, free-speech groups have faulted Alexander for taking the latter view. She announced in October how she would comply with funding cuts; the programs she disproportionately squeezed happened to be among the most controversial. Moves like these may bring the endowment closer to Alexander's accessible, democratic ideal. They may also be what's necessary to save the NEA from Newt Gingrich's chopping block. •



ILLUSTRATION BY THE NEW REPUBLIC

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LET'S APPEASE RUSSIA!

By Michael Lind

“Europe is in danger of plunging into a cold peace.” With those words, Boris Yeltsin, speaking on December 5, 1994, at a meeting in Budapest, put the United States and its allies on notice that Russia remains a great power determined to defend its prerogatives. Days earlier, the Russian government had reversed its decision to join NATO’s “Partnership for Peace,” and had used its U.N. Security Council veto to block new sanctions against Russia’s traditional clients in the Balkans, the Serbs. The military confrontation between Moscow and rebels in the breakaway republic of Chechnya added underlining and an exclamation point.

The response in the United States was swift from the post-cold war alliance of liberal crusaders and Russo-centric conservatives. Leftists who felt queasy denouncing a multinational socialist empire thrilled at the prospect of denouncing a capitalist, “fascist” Russian nation-state. Former hawks on the right warmed to denouncing the Clinton administration for being soft on the Russians. The Bear, both sides agree, is on the prowl again. Today, Chechnya; tomorrow, Ingushetia; the day after, who knows? NATO must be expanded quickly to incorporate Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak republics and perhaps Ukraine, before Russia re-establishes a Romanov-Soviet bloc. In a week, *The New York Times* rolled out John le Carré on the left and *The Washington Post* disinterred Henry Kissinger on the right to sound the alarm. All of this, in response to modest muscle-flexing by a power that is finding it hard to put down mountaineers with hunting rifles.

This flap will pass. But it provides an occasion for us to think carefully about the place of Russia—and of the United States—in the world at the turn of the millennium. We must begin by recognizing that we really did win the cold war—and that our margin of victory was greater than anyone could have dreamed a few years ago. Few Western strategists in the past half-century had a clear idea of how the cold war would finally be concluded. No one, in 1949, or even 1989, would have believed that in a few years NATO would include a united Germany, the Warsaw Pact would be gone and Russia would be shorn not only of satellites but of

Ukraine and much of the Central Asian territory conquered by the Romanovs. This was not merely a victory; it was a rout.

Instead of relaxing after the party, much of America’s foreign policy class has once again become panicked about the Russian menace. The new cold warriors come in three varieties: liberal crusaders, Russophobes and realists committed to a unipolar, American-dominated world. The liberal crusaders oppose Russia because it is insufficiently democratic; the Russophobes oppose Russia because it is Russia; and the anti-Russian realists oppose Russia because it is a great power.

The liberal crusaders are the most easily dismissed. Avoiding the difficult choices among various international causes, the crusaders (most of whom are found in editorial offices) have little trouble moving from praise for the brave Viet Cong and Sandinistas to cheers for the Kurds, the Timorese and, now, the Chechens. Now and then, they are right. But a foreign policy based on rescuing every beleaguered minority or fledgling nation-state soon collapses under the weight of its lofty ambitions.

The more serious liberal crusaders, such as Strobe Talbott, propose that the United States tailor its Russian policy to encourage the “evolution” of Russia toward “democratic capitalism” (to use the quasi-Marxist terminology favored in Washington). Some who hold this view argue that Russian neo-imperialism should be indulged at times out of a recognition that Yeltsin the democratic reformer has to throw sops to extreme Russian nationalists. This policy, of course, treats Yeltsin’s Russia as a democracy, rather than a plebiscitary presidential dictatorship. It suffers further from the flaw that it would reward democratic reformers with licenses for imperialism (free presidential elections will give you a right to Chechnya; democratize municipal government and you can have Crimea back). This hair-of-the-dog cure for aggression is absurd. But then, so is the underlying theory.

The theory that democracies are naturally pacific and that dictatorships are inherently expansionist is held by much of the American foreign policy elite. It is also highly dubious. Most of the states in the world

MICHAEL LIND is a senior editor of *Harper’s* magazine.

in the past few centuries have been autocratic monarchies or dictatorships. Most have not tried to conquer their neighbors. At the same time, democracies such as the United States, France and Britain have at various times conquered much of the planet and a sizable portion of mankind. The largest empire in history was won and maintained by the oldest parliamentary democracy on earth.

This does not mean that democracies are naturally bellicose or that dictatorships are inherently peace-loving. The most important distinction in world politics is not between democracies and dictatorships, but between great powers (democratic or dictatorial) and lesser powers (democratic or dictatorial). Compared with weak countries, great powers can define their interests more expansively—and tend to collide with a greater number of other states.

Great powers, in turn, may be status quo powers or revisionist powers, depending on whether they accept the norms and practices of the state system as it has evolved in the past several centuries or wish to overturn it. Regimes like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and Shiite Iran can maintain their legitimacy only by fomenting world revolution in the name of their militant creeds. However, nationalist or traditionalist dictatorships, whether civilian or military, are often conservative and rule-abiding in their external policies. Contrary to the claims of the liberal crusaders, a dictatorial, nationalist Russia might (or might not) pursue a modest, traditional great-power policy.

Here, the Russophobes enter the debate. Russia is incapable of acting as an ordinary great power, we are told, because of a supposed irrepressible Russian drive for expansion. For the Russophobes, the cold war was not about Stalin's refusal to vacate Eastern Europe and renounce global revisionism; it was merely an episode in a centuries-long struggle between Russia and "the West" (identified implicitly, it is worth noting, with the defunct British and Austrian empires). A few

years ago at a Washington conference, Frank Gaffney, one of the right's leading cold warriors, argued that the world would never be safe until Russia had been reduced to the dimensions of the Grand Duchy of Moscow.

Russophobia is primarily fed by émigré intellectuals from Britain or Central Europe. For example, the influential conservative naval theorist Colin Gray, an immigrant from Britain, has long argued that the United States is the heir to Britain and thus to Britain's role in the nineteenth-century "Great Game" with Russia. In reality, Anglo-Russian rivalry was based

on Britain's anxiety about the land and sea approaches to its Indian colony, not on some mystical, eternal conflict between "land power" and "sea power." A similar British bias led Sir Halford Mackinder to overrate the importance of control of the Heartland (Central Asia) and Eastern Europe in world power calculations. The American diplomat George Kennan was far closer to the mark when he argued early in the cold war that manufacturing centers, not steppes and straits, are the keys to world power.

Other émigrés—mostly Polish—stress historic Russian urges toward expansion. But the picture of a Russian people with an insatiable appetite

for territory is overdrawn. For centuries, the Russians did very poorly at expansion, as they were conquered by Vikings, Mongols, Teutonic Knights and Swedes. Russian inroads in Siberia and Muslim Central Asia in recent centuries were no different in kind from the Spanish conquest of the Americas, British imperialism in North America, India and Africa, or the expansion of the United States at the expense of the Indians, Mexicans, Hawaiians and Filipinos. In Eastern Europe, the Balkans and nineteenth-century China, Russia acted as only one of several great-power predators. Russia stayed out of the Scramble for Africa altogether, leaving the carving mainly to the European democracies.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

While they stress historic Russian expansion to the South and East, Russophobes usually neglect to point out that Russian governments of quite different characters have pursued a conservative status quo policy with respect to Western Europe, during the Napoleonic wars, the Revolutions of 1848 and the First and Second World Wars. Like the United States, Russia carved out a continental domain at the expense of weaker neighbors, while limiting its intervention in Western Europe to participation in alliances against Western European hegemony such as Napoleon and Hitler. The actual pattern of Russian foreign policy is one of strategic discrimination, not irrepressible expansion rooted in atavistic national traits.

The realists among the new cold warriors are not Russophobes. They are less concerned with Russian national character than with Russian power. They believe that the very existence of a Russian great power is a threat to the United States. These realists want Russia to be Canada. They mean no offense to Russia, as such; they also want Germany to be Switzerland and Japan to be the Dutch Antilles.

These realists might be called Pax Americana realists, to distinguish them from balance-of-power realists. The Pax Americana realists believe that the United States can never be secure unless it dominates or isolates every other great power in the world. Few who think this way will say so in public, particularly after the flap caused by a 1992 draft Pentagon policy planning document that suggested that the post-cold war purpose of America's alliances was to keep Germany and Japan weak and dependent. A few years ago in the journal *Survival*, Samuel Huntington set forth the tenets of Pax Americana realism with commendable candor when he wrote that the United States must "prevent the reimposition of Soviet or Russian military or political control in Eastern Europe, which presumably can best be achieved by NATO guaranteeing the national independence, territorial integrity, political democracy and diplomatic neutrality of the former Soviet-bloc states." Huntington linked the permanent emasculation of Russia with that of Germany: the United States must "limit German power in the new Europe, by encouraging German involvement in NATO and European international organizations, while at the same time working with the U.K., France and other countries to constrain German control over those organizations." The United States, moreover, must "provide constraints on Japanese power in East Asia." In private, many Bush and Clinton officials have shared this reasoning.

During the early years of the cold war, Churchill's military adviser Lord Ismay famously remarked that the purpose of NATO was to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down." This policy of "dual containment" has shaped the American alliances with both Germany and Japan, economic great powers that remain American military protectorates. In order to prevent Germany and Japan from rejecting protec-

torate status and becoming fully independent military powers, the United States, since the end of the cold war, has tried to prove that it will protect out-of-area German and Japanese interests, making their rearmament unnecessary. In the Gulf war, the Balkan war and the North Korean crisis, American policy has been shaped by the logic of Pax Americana realism; if the United States does not defend German and Japanese oil supplies, or promote stability near Germany's borders, or prevent North Korea from obtaining nuclear weapons, then it will lose credibility as a patron.

If the project of establishing a global Pax Americana is to succeed, then the system of dual containment of Germany and Japan must be generalized into a system of universal containment of every potential great power rival, including Russia, China and, perhaps, India. Other great powers must be offered the choice of surrendering an independent foreign policy to the United States and multinational institutions under American control, or being isolated and encircled by an American-led coalition. Some have made the case for the benefits of an America-centered world (most of them have been Americans). As a practical matter, however, the project is doomed. A Pax Americana might have been possible in 1945, when the United States was responsible for half the world's GDP and had a nuclear monopoly. For a quarter-century or more U.S. global hegemony has been impossible, though many American liberals and conservatives of an older generation, shaped by World War II and the early cold war, refuse to accept the new limits to American power.

A new generation of American strategists will have to craft a more modest foreign policy for a United States that must find its way in the fully multipolar world that will emerge in the next generation. Unable to subordinate the other great powers, American leaders will have to learn the art—forgotten since 1945—of playing one powerful country against another to America's advantage. In the complex power politics of the twenty-first century, Russia might be a natural ally of the United States—paradoxically, because of Russia's very backwardness.

Geopolitical might in the future, even more than now, may depend on technological innovation and control of large and rich markets. While powerful countries need not be affluent consumer societies, no future power is likely to repeat the Soviet trick of combining a world-class military with a grossly inefficient economy. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ravings about orbiting death stars and secret weapons would be more frightening if Rump Russia had something like the industrial base of Japan or Germany. In time, the Russian economy will improve—but not that much. Aside from North America, the most potent military industrial centers in the foreseeable future will be in East Asia and Western Europe. Against a hostile European or East Asian power, or an Axis-like combination, a moderately strong Russia might serve as a useful counterweight.

It is worth recalling that Russia and the United States have had a long history of geopolitical cooperation, based not on cultural affinity, but on coincident interests. In 1812 Russia took the initiative in offering to moderate an end to the war between the United States and Britain, in order to focus British power against Napoleon. Later, the Russian empire and the American republic shared a common adversary in Britain (during the Crimean War, 300 Kentucky riflemen volunteered to fight for Russia against the despised British). Russia tilted toward the North during the American Civil War, in order to deter Britain from entering the conflict on behalf of the Confederacy, inspiring Oliver Wendell Holmes to write a poem, "America to Russia": "Though watery deserts hold apart / The worlds of East and West, / Still beats the selfsame human heart / In each proud Nation's breast." The Russian government preferred to have Alaska pass into American rather than British control. After Britain settled its differences with Russia and the United States in the early twentieth century, the two continental powers joined the island power in the wars against the new common threat, Germany.

One of the paradoxes of today's foreign policy debate is that many of those, such as Kissinger, who favor a hard line toward bankrupt Russia argue for continuing and deepening economic and military cooperation with an authoritarian China that is rapidly growing in wealth and power. What will be more of a threat to U.S. interests in ten or twenty years—a weak, backward, partially democratic Russia of 150 million, pushed back from its historic frontiers, with a rusting industrial plant, or a Chinese autocracy with a billion and a half people, an economy modernized with Japanese and American help, an empire that stretches from Tibet and Turkestan to Indochina and the Sea of Japan, a pan-Asian ideology, and ambitious rulers contemptuous of American weakness and decadence? Strengthening China and punishing Russia, in 1995, makes about as much sense as a British policy of appeasing Germany and fretting about the historic French menace would have done in 1900.

These are considerations for the long run. In the immediate future, it is important that the United States and Russia agree on rules for their new relationship as great powers that are neither adversaries nor allies.

For its part, Russia must agree to act as a conventional power. This means foregoing most of the instruments of the old Soviet revisionist statecraft: provocative arms build-ups, sponsorship of terrorist groups and anti-Western states such as Iraq, Libya and North Korea, propaganda offensives and meddling in the regions of other great powers, like the Western hemisphere.

The United States, in turn, should acquiesce in the exercise by Russia, whether democratic or not, of the traditional prerogatives of a great power. If the United States can intervene in the Caribbean and Central

America, if France can take sides in wars in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, if Britain can prove it is still a significant power by warring with Argentina, if Chinese hegemony over Tibet, Turkestan and contested islands in the South China Sea is tolerated, it is difficult to understand how the Russians can be denied the right to defend their security interests in their "near abroad" of Central Asia.

The United States should be particularly cautious about criticizing Russia's responses to threats to its territorial integrity, like the insurrection in Chechnya. Turkey's long and brutal war against Kurdish separatists has not been thought to disqualify Turkey from continuing membership in NATO, or to make Turkey a threat to world peace. It makes no sense to condemn Russian exercises of power, within or beyond Russian borders, without assessing Russian motives. It does make a difference whether the Russians are intervening in Central Asia to secure their borders or as the first step toward overturning the state system. A revisionist Russian would-be superpower with global ambitions would be a threat; a traditional Russian great power with modest regional goals would not be. It is folly to confuse the two, to treat the Russia envisioned by Zhirinovskiy and the Russia of Yeltsin as the same thing.

It is not in America's interest to back a weak, friendless Russia into a wall, by expanding NATO into a cumbersome and unnecessarily hostile coalition. In the absence of a viable Russian threat, the entire creaky structure—from Belfast to Kiev—would be a purely symbolic contraption, and far too diffuse to be effective. The wrangling of NATO's members during the Gulf war and the Balkan war gives us an idea of the most likely NATO response to conflict between Russia and one or more Eastern European states. During the Gulf war the Germans debated whether they were obligated under the NATO treaty to defend Turkey from Iraqi attacks; a sizable bloc in the Bundestag claimed that Turkey, because it allowed the United States to use its air bases, was engaging in aggressive war! Since then, the discord among the members of NATO during the Balkan war has paralyzed the alliance. In both cases the problem has not been a lack of willpower, or morality, or wisdom, but genuine conflicts of interest among member countries. In the absence of the overwhelming Soviet threat, the interests of the NATO allies are naturally diverging. To invent a threat in order to reunite these interests is to act against the grain of both history and sanity.

"The two peoples have no injuries to remember," the Tsar wrote in 1866, explaining the traditional amity of Russia and the United States. The danger today is that we will remember only the injuries, after the death of more than 80,000 Americans in the proxy wars with the Soviet Union. In all likelihood the United States in the next century will find itself engaged in similarly protracted and expensive cold wars. With Russia's help, we might win those as well. •

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

High Gear and Low

Production design can be insidious—the better the design, the more subtly beguiling. What I remember about *Batman* is the lowering Fritz-Langian city designed by the late Anton Furst. What I'll remember of *Disclosure* (Warner Bros.) is the central design by Neil Spisak.

The main setting is the headquarters of a large computer-manufacturing company in Seattle. Spisak has brilliantly conceived an immense glassy, gleaming building—many floors of offices, meeting rooms, labs—like a giant smug spider, its insides visible as it masticates the scurrying people within. It's like Mies van der Rohe with an added dollop of postmodernist skepticism, almost self-mockery. When the film wandered away from that structure, as it had to do very often, I could hardly wait for it to get back.

This is not to say that the story is dull, only that essentially it's just another Michael Crichton shotgun wedding. A staple of his prolific career has been the fusion of hot topics with standard armatures—usually of suspense. In *Rising Sun* he used the incursion of Japan into the American economy; this time it's sexual harassment in the workplace. This is currently as steamy a topic as there is, and Crichton has welded it onto a plot of twists and zingers. He had no genuine interest in the subject, no concern to explore its psychic-emotional-social roilings; he just wanted to exploit the theme. There are some comments in passing, of course ("Sexual harassment isn't about sex. It's about power"), which do not exactly stun with fresh insight. But the focus, in the

screenplay that Paul Attanasio drew from Crichton's novel, is on plot gimmicks of the John Grisham variety.

Michael Douglas, married with children, is head of a department in the company. At the start he is pretty sure of promotion to a higher position, but he finds out that the post has been given to someone brought in from outside—a woman with whom he once had a torrid affair, Demi Moore. On the day that she begins work, she invites him to her office at 7 p.m., presumably on business. She has a bottle of his favorite wine waiting. She pounces on him.

He resists right from the start (we learn later that he says "no" thirty-one times), though by sheer physical insistence she gains some headway. So to speak. At last, after almost reflexively tearing off her panties, he tears himself away and leaves.

This is the best scene in the film, not for what may seem the obvious reason but because Barry Levinson, the director, and

Douglas found a way to keep the man's behavior in balance. Douglas really does want to remain faithful to his wife, yet he has to be kept from seeming a stupid prig—he is male and he does have sweaty memories of this woman. (Moore's role is easier: she just has to keep coming on.) It's the one scene in the picture that has some depth of texture.

Moore runs out into the hallway after him, clothes awry, yelling that he has to come back and finish or she will fix him good. (We're asked to believe this behavior in a coolly scheming woman. How could she have been sure that there would be only one person around, a cleaning woman?) Her vengeance then follows the ancient principle of Potiphar's wife: a spurned woman accuses the man she wanted of sexual aggression. She takes action against Douglas for harassment. Douglas, unfazed, counteracts. We know he is telling the truth, but he has to fight the usual presumption that the woman's account is more reliable.

Maneuvers, back and forth, ensue. Justice finally triumphs, in case you doubted that it would. Besides the thrills of the chase and the glow of a happy ending, we are meant to feel more mature because we have dallied with a Big Subject.

Moore once again looks and sounds like a construct. The computer firm deals in virtual-reality equipment: if those devices could produce a three-dimensional woman, it would be Moore. She looks, moves, sounds just like a human being, except that nobody is home. Douglas once again gives his role his all, which is poignantly insufficient. He has much commitment, little force. And, though he is only 50, his face is beginning to age. I don't mean wrinkles, I mean the shape of his mouth.

Levinson directs briskly enough and has some sturdy people to work with, notably Donald Sutherland as the CEO and Roma Maffia as Douglas's lawyer. But the most authentic element in the film is Spisak's set.

Paul Newman is beginning to age, too.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Colonel Chabert. Balzac's story deftly adapted, directed, acted. Gérard Depardieu towers as the unexpected survivor of a Napoleonic battle who upsets the people who thought him dead. (Reviewed 12/26/94) **Ladybird Ladybird.** An unmarried London mother fights to keep her children. Once again Ken Loach treats the poor as if they actually lived in the same world with us, and does it with skill and sympathy. (12/12/94) **Red.** A young woman with love troubles, a crusty retired judge who remembers the same sort of troubles, some lovers around them. Disregard all the inflated talk about the director, Krzysztof Kieslowski, and find a good Chabrol tale. (12/19/94) **Vanya on 42nd Street.** A treasure. Under André Gregory's direction, a group of actors gathers in an abandoned theater for a run-through of "Uncle Vanya." The kind of Chekhov acting we long for and rarely get. (11/7/94)—SK

He took twenty years longer to do it than Douglas, but it's beginning to be visible around his mouth and nose. Shucks. Still, it's always good to see him, and he's plenteously visible in **Nobody's Fool** (Paramount).

Newman plays a man who spends his life just moseying along. That's the true intent, in dynamics, of the screenplay written by the director, Robert Benton, from a novel by Richard Russo. Benton wanted to re-create the life of a small town—upstate New York in this instance, in midwinter—as the people do every day what they do every day. Newman is a divorced odd-jobs man, who boards with Jessica Tandy (her next-to-last role). He does whatever work comes his way, goes to his favorite bar, plays poker in back with his pals, sometimes flirts amiably with another man's wife.

Newman's ex-wife, remarried, lives in the town; his and her son, with his family, comes to spend the holidays with his mother and his stepfather. Out of this visit grows much of the action of the story, and the paradox of the picture is that, as it gets more active, it gets less interesting. The complications seem whooped-up, as if we would be disappointed if the picture *weren't* whooped-up, when the charm of it is its dailiness. This is especially true of some plot stuff with the other man's wife. Less, in this case, might have been more, if the film had simply comprehended the span of

lives in a specific place, as in David Mamet's recent novel *The Village*.

By having Newman on hand, Benton reaps a benefit and pays a penalty. The benefit is that having Newman present is a generally good idea for any picture. The penalty is that it's hard to imagine anyone suffering this man's fate if he looks and sounds like Newman. Walter Matthau, perhaps. But Newman?

Tandy has a sizable part but it's very much a one-note affair, so we can't help being a bit disappointed. Let's have some hope about *Camilla*, her one picture yet to come. Benton's best achievement here is in getting something like a performance out of Melanie Griffith as the married woman who teases, and is teased by, Newman. Griffith's voice is still a peanut-stand whistle, but, with Benton's help, something fairly lifelike comes through from her. Bruce Willis, as her macho husband, once again shows ability. The part would have been easy to cartoon; Willis makes him a credible swine.

A special word for Pruitt Taylor Vince. He plays Newman's unbright young helper-sidekick who quietly worships his boss. Vince (I mean this in the most complimentary sense) creates a kind of human dog, glad when his boss pays attention to him, jealous of any competition for his boss's affection (after Newman's son arrives). In a quiet film, Vince's performance is a quiet pleasure. •

The ageless mind of Meyer Schapiro.

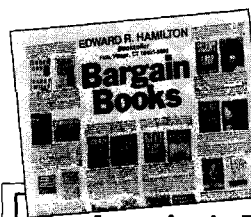
The Seer

BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER

I.

Longevity can be unsettling to historians. Respectful of the pastness of the past, they are discomforted by those who, by living very long, present the past in person. Long-lived people threaten historical reconstruction by setting against it the authority of the eyewitness. They muddle the discreteness of historical periods by having survived, often unchanged, through several of them. Their appeal, one feels, is not to reason, but to piety and superstition; we marvel at our acquaintance with a man who shook the hand of a man who shook the hand of Napoleon.

To historians, of course, longevity is also banal. Aunt Sophie, who passed Freud every day on her way to school but remembers only that his chow was named Jofi; Grandpa Karl, who spent the '20s in Berlin in a hotel room reading P.G. Wodehouse; old Mr. Francis, whose only recollections of the Great War are of his excellent mess kit: these blind eyewitnesses are the norm. Submitting great events and personages to the bathos of actual experience, they reveal history itself to be a learned superstition, a projection of order back onto the chaos of existence. Longevity reminds us of the inattention of life, and mocks us with questions of a vast, inarticulate and forgotten meanwhile: What did Aunt Sophie do in those fourscore



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years between her encounters with Jofi and the present day? And did Freud notice little Sophie, or was he, as well, too absorbed in his beloved chow?

Even more unsettling to the historian, though, is when longevity blesses another historian. Beyond simply arousing the envy of frailer colleagues, long-lived historians can forge unholy alliances between professional and personal authority. They instruct their younger colleagues, and they threaten them, with a simple "I was there." Most historians, of course, are like Grandpa Karl, buried in words and blind to the world, but in rare instances they emerge as agents in history; and when they do, they acquire the significance of a hero.

Meyer Schapiro, who recently turned 90, is art history's only living hero. He is at once America's greatest art historian and a great figure in the history of modern American art. In Schapiro, longevity is linked uncannily with an abiding precociousness. His work as a young medievalist in the early 1930s seems more contemporary than most academic art history of the 1980s. His use of semiotics in the late 1960s made him, around the time of his retirement, a Young Turk of his discipline. (He also anticipated, during the 1930s, the current rage for Bakhtin.) And most of all his advocacy and his keen understanding of new art, of aesthetic expressions that strive to be ahead of their times, maintain him still as among the youngest of us all. Schapiro is what the panegyrists and the hagiographers in late antiquity called a *puer senex*, a "child-old-man," endowed in youth with the wisdom of age and in age with the vigor of youth.

In the many conferences, journals and exhibitions organized in Schapiro's honor, and in the awards, the degrees and the distinguished lectureships that celebrate him, what is revered above all is his matchless personal scope. His *Selected Papers*, now complete in four volumes, testify to his staggering range of interests. The first volume, published in 1971 under the title *Romanesque Art*, collected his famous early work on French sculpture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, on Spanish art in the transition from Mozarabic to Romanesque, and on medieval aesthetics. It was followed, in 1977, by *Modern Art*, a prize-winning book that included Schapiro's brilliant essays on Courbet, Cézanne, van Gogh, Seurat, Picasso, Chagall and Mondrian, as well as three legendary pieces on abstract art. The third volume, *Late Antique, Early Christian, and Medieval Art* (1979), gathered essays on subjects ranging from Byzantine mosaics and

Carolingian calendar pages to Irish sculpture, early Netherlandish and Italian trecento panel painting, Spanish illuminated manuscripts, and Jewish, Christian and Islamic iconography.

Here, finally, is Schapiro's long-awaited fourth volume. It collects three important methodological essays plus several studies of particular philosophers and critics of art. And the 1,200 pages or so of Schapiro's *Selected Papers* are, moreover, only the tip of an iceberg. In addition to books on van Gogh (1950), on Cézanne (1952), on the Parma Ildefonsus (1964) and on *Words and Pictures* (1973), there exist more than 200 unpublished art historical essays gathered in albums; four big, unpublished lecture series; unfinished book manuscripts on Seurat, Impressionism and Picasso; and countless other pieces on religion, myth and politics.

Within this vast, unfinished *oeuvre*, it is hard to detect any single center of critical attention. But it is important to note immediately that Schapiro markedly avoids the traditional high points of

*Theory and Philosophy of Art:
Style, Artists, and Society
Selected Papers, Vol. IV*

by Meyer Schapiro
(George Braziller, 253 pp., \$27.50)

the Western canon: ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy. He works on everything but the classical moments in order to dispute the notion of the "classical." In Schapiro's view, there exists no universally valid artistic ideal, no norm of beauty that obtains for all times and all places. Medieval art, disparaged by classicist aesthetics as ugly and ruleless, and modern avant-garde art, which consciously set out to overturn traditional ideals, are for Schapiro evidence against universal norms in art, and evidence also of art's universal human value. By corrupting, forgetting or disrupting normative ideals, medieval and modern artworks best exemplify art's highest function, which is to serve and to define humanity by displaying a labor that is truly free.

Schapiro's legendary status is owed also to his work as a teacher. At Columbia University for nearly fifty years, and in his evening lectures and classes at New York University, the New School, Cooper Union, the New York Studio School and museums throughout the city, Schapiro defined for a huge public, and over three generations, what art is. This public included not only scholars, critics, curators, docents and an interested laity, but practicing artists, too. Painters and sculptors such as Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, Robert

Motherwell, Donald Judd, Allan Kaprow, Alice Neel and George Segal learned from Schapiro; and they learned more than an outline of European art history or a working repertory of visual allusions. In his elegant statements of the goals of contemporary art, and in the way in which he dignified the avant-garde's break with the past by making it out to be at once humanistically motivated and historically resonant, Schapiro provided young artists with a commanding language with which to explain their products to a bewildered public.

Schapiro is a magician of the spoken word. Irving Sandler has described him as "the most inspiring lecturer in the entire teaching profession. When he talks, he levitates. He's about six inches off the ground." (This exaltation is hard to experience in his published texts, which, with the exception of his great early pieces on Romanesque art, are written in a clear, careful, sometimes lyrical but rarely sublime style.) The profligacy with which Schapiro dispensed his thoughts to others was combined with an immense personal charm. Already in 1927, in an unpublished memoir, the poet and Columbia professor Mark Van Doren wrote that the young Schapiro's "face was passionate, and it was positively beautiful." Such charisma mixed with learning helped to bring Schapiro into the orbit of a staggering array of this century's most important artists and intellectuals.

It was Schapiro, we learn in a recent interview published in the *Oxford Review*, whom Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer sent to Paris in 1939 to persuade Walter Benjamin to emigrate to the United States; at their meeting, Benjamin identified himself by marching up and down the café with a copy of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, the journal of Frankfurt School sociology, displayed under his arm. It was Schapiro who arranged a fateful meeting between the exiled Leon Trotsky and André Breton, and turned Trotsky's secretary Jean van Heijenoort to mathematics. And it was Schapiro who helped the refugee art historian Max Raphael during his exile in Paris and New York, before the two broke (according to Schapiro at least) over the question of Stalin. During the 1930s in New York, Schapiro belonged to that talented circle of left-wing anti-Stalinists around *Partisan Review*; and unlike most of his friends on the left, Schapiro was, as Saul Bellow once remarked, "the only person . . . against whom no one had anything terrible to say."

Schapiro's aura of eternal youth, as well as his status as great modernizer

within a discipline habitually turned toward the past, is owed less to his precocious reading of theory and more to his passion for new art. His relation to the New York art community was always symbiotic. He instructed new talents who, in turn, offered him novel ways of seeing and understanding older art. In his classes at Columbia, he sometimes supplemented his own talks with presentations by practicing artists. This exchange between the historian and the artist reflected Schapiro's deepest convictions about the value of art.

Schapiro began his career as a pioneering scholar of Romanesque sculpture. Previous scholars, prejudiced by their classicist taste or by the nineteenth-century historicist ideal of Gothicism, had judged Romanesque art to be misshapen or mismade, and explained it either as a decadent vestige of the Antique or as the primitive forebear of the High Gothic. Schapiro, by contrast, celebrated the jumbled design and the grotesque features of Romanesque sculpture; in his eyes, they represented a unique and powerfully expressive aesthetic form to be judged on its own terms. His dissertation, written in 1929, on the decorative program of the abbey church of Moissac, was the first scholarly treatment of a Romanesque sculptural group as a work of art rather than as a mere historical document. Yet even as he demonstrated that all artistic periods were created equal, Schapiro recognized that his ability to appreciate these alien forms had itself been shaped by the tastes and the prejudices of his own time. Romanesque sculpture could appeal to Schapiro during the 1920s not because it possessed some absolute value, but because it resembled the modernist sculpture that had taught him to see.

Every generation discovers the past as the image of its present. Around 1900, Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl, the founders of the formalist method in art history, derived their attention to structure (as distinct from content) under the influence of contemporary art practices that foregrounded "pure" form—*art nouveau*, late Impressionism and so on. And Wilhelm Worringer's influential *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907)

clearly paralleled the aesthetics of Post-Impressionism, Expressionism and Cubism.

Schapiro made his relation to contemporary art fully explicit. He could appreciate the Romanesque sculptor's "discoordination," as he called it, because of what modern artists had taught him about abstraction and deformation. Modern artists had cleared away the assumption, dominant in the Western tradition since the Renaissance, that art aimed at imitating reality. By breaking with the immediate past, moreover, they also prepared the way for understanding the totality of the past. As Schapiro wrote in 1937, in "The Nature of Abstract Art":



MEYER SCHAPIRO. SELF-PORTRAIT. 1927. COLLECTION MEYER SCHAPIRO

What was once considered monstrous, now became pure form and pure expression, the aesthetic evidence that in art feeling and thought are prior to the represented world. The art of the whole world was now available on a single unhistorical and universal plane as a panorama of the formalizing energies of man.

And in his famous essay called "Style," in 1962, he concluded:

With the change in Western art during the last seventy years, naturalistic representation has lost its superior status. Basic for contemporary practice and for knowledge of past art is the theoretical view that what counts in art are all the elementary aesthetic components, the qualities and relationships of fabricated lines, spots, colors, and surfaces [my italics].

Abstraction's break with history ends up broadening history. It is the historian's task, according to Schapiro, to elucidate this expanded field and to bring it to the notice of artists, whose work, in turn, will be broadened by, and will continue to broaden, alternative pasts. Thus, the historians and the artists work together to retain art's traditional freedom by undermining the traditionalists' fixed definition of art.

An anecdote illustrates this interaction. In 1931 Schapiro, then a young lecturer at Columbia, chanced upon Fernand Léger outside the entrance to the Museum of Modern Art. Léger, whose first American retrospective had just opened there, was trying to make some point in French about cows to a bewildered New Yorker when Schapiro, on his way to the show, stepped in to help translate. In thanks, Léger agreed to walk the young man through the exhibition; and by the end of the tour he was so impressed by Schapiro's knowledge that he asked him to show one work in the city that was really worth seeing. Schapiro took Léger to the Pierpont Morgan Library and produced the *Beatus Apocalypse*, a little-known but immensely beautiful Spanish manuscript of the tenth century. As Schapiro would later recall, he "observed with satisfaction" the painter's "strong response to this art. I do not think that I am fanciful in seeing in certain of Léger's works... the

effects of his enthusiasm." Thus the young medievalist, allowed to view modern art with a contemporary master, repaid his debt by teaching the master his art history.

Schapiro, alone among major art historians of our century, makes past art and present art interpret one another. Indeed, until fairly recently he was the only scholar of note who took contemporary art seriously at all. As Hans Belting has argued in *The End of the History of Art?*, the antagonism of art historians to modern artists is as old as our discipline. It was in the Romantic period that art, together with all forms of culture, was first interpreted as the relative product of a specific time and place. Experiencing older art became a labor of contex-

Photograph by Karen Berman

tualization. Because its original historical conditions had passed away, it was argued, the work of art could function as a document of the past, or as an object of pure contemplation, but no living relation to present circumstances could be assumed any longer. Contemporary art, which by necessity had a relation to those circumstances, found no place within this project.

Hegel announced famously, at the opening of his *Lectures on Aesthetics* in Berlin in the early 1820s, that "art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past"; and the discipline of art history, founded as it was upon Romantic historicism, took Hegel at his word. Limiting itself to the study of past art, it established an impenetrable, if movable, horizon between itself and whatever age preceded it. And at the very same time as art died into art history, practicing artists sought to kill off the tradition that had preceded them, seeking always new forms of expression radically different from the past. Successive avant-gardes proved their originality precisely by being rejected by the art critics of their day. And art historians took this present chaos as further proof that the eternal values of art were behind them.

This is the deep-seated antagonism that Schapiro overcomes. As a historian, he seeks out estranged historical pasts: the "discoordinated" Romanesque style, the weird marginalia in medieval manuscripts, the Islamic legacy within Christian art, and so forth. And he does this in order to accommodate into history an even stranger present. In the past two decades, contemporary art has become more integrated into academic art history; dissertations on younger living artists are common now, and eminent scholars of earlier art frequently march forward in time to poach on the preserves of the art critics; and all this has occurred not least as a result of Schapiro's example. *Puer senex*.

II.

Scholars of contemporary art labor to place their object in a strict historical context, of course, but they also study new art in tandem with what has come to be known as "theory." This makes some historical sense. It is not only the academics who are reading Lacan and Derrida, Bataille and Baudrillard, Heidegger and Habermas; these difficult thinkers command the attention of some of the leading artists of our time, just as German Romantic painters struggled in their day with the aesthetics of Kant. And this, too, is a part of Schapiro's teaching. For the

community of scholars who kindle to theory, certainly, the new volume of Schapiro's papers will be met with special interest.

Collected under the title *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, these essays date largely from the 1960s, with one important piece from 1953 and two "Further Notes" from 1994. It makes available also some lesser-known pieces that have been hidden in obscure volumes, specialized journals and out-of-print editions. The volume divides roughly in three parts corresponding to the terms of the subtitle, "Style, Artist, and Society." The introductory essays are the most critical. They include the famous essay "Style" and an early contribution to visual semiotics. (Missing, unfortunately, is Schapiro's other great semiotic study, "Word and Object.") The rest of the volume consists of discrete studies of individual thinkers on painting, which in their sequence plot a trajectory from the individual artist to the larger society. The volume closes with a little piece on public funding of science and art.

Viewed as a whole, the book seeks to understand how, by means of style (which Schapiro defines as "the constant form . . . in the art of an individual or group"), the individual artist shapes and is shaped by society. The opening essay, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle," is the strongest one in the volume. Taking as its subject those fundamental elements of the image that are logically and temporally prior to representation, prior even to the image's constitution as a coherent thing, it best exemplifies the radical character of Schapiro's radical thought—radical, in that he has a rare ability to go straight to the root, or *radix*, of the visual arts. "Field," he argues, is what the image occupies, its prepared or unprepared surface; this surface can be with or without boundaries, format and direction, depending on its particular expression. "Vehicle" is the image's "sign-bearing matter" itself, the visible marks that appear within the field. In European easel painting, the field is the framed, flat rectangle of canvas and the vehicle is brushed-on paint. In paleolithic art, the field is the rough unbounded cave wall and the vehicle is the overlapping scratches or pigments on the wall.

These are curious subjects for an essay on the "semiotics" of art, if we mean, by semiotics, the study of images as signs for something else. Schapiro attends instead to the image's untranslatable objecthood, its primary character as mute thing, independent of the references and the meanings it might

bear. He challenges our inherited ideas that fields are always close and regular, and that vehicles function as means for representing reality. More specifically, he reveals these ideas to be historically contingent conventions, and juxtaposes them to alternative conventions, such as the boundless palimpsests of prehistoric art, the unoriented drawings of children and the modern artist's experiments with irregular surfaces and boundless canvases.

Like all would-be explorers of alternative worlds, of course, Schapiro soon reaches a limit in his examples. Children are given square paper to draw on, and the colors that they use are of an adult's palette. Even "the monkey painters in our zoos" work with the fields and vehicles of their keeper: "The concrete result on paper, however spontaneous it appears, is a product of domestication, which means, of course, the influence of a culture." Typically for Schapiro, it is not prehistory, childhood, madness or nature that offers the most radical instance, it is modern art:

The frameless modern picture explains in a sense the functions of the frame in older art. The frame was indispensable when painting ceased to represent deep space and became more concerned with the expression and formal qualities of non-mimetic marks than with their elaboration into signs.

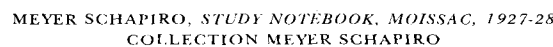
Modern art, in advance of any theory that might now interpret it, is what brought field and vehicle once again into view as the contingencies they are. To be sure, art has always played with its own conventions, constructing pictures that escape their frame and frames that contain further frames and pictures. Yet such older experiments with field and vehicle, however representative they are of pictorial intelligence, still support the general project of illusionism, of making things seem other than they are. Modern abstract art, by contrast, no longer depicts external things and therefore it can fully lay bare its own objecthood. It puts on display the very materials with which it is made, as well as the manual labor that made it. Teaching its viewers to attend to the "artificial mark" itself, independent of what it may depict, abstraction changes how we see earlier, mimetic painting.

Schapiro proves himself to be the model pupil of this modern pedagogy. By attending closely to the framed pictorial field as something historically made rather than naturally found, he can discern the formal achievements specific to artists and to periods. Thus, he brilliantly sums up, in a single sen-

This amounts to saying only that "On Perfection" is perfectly of its time. Per-

Schapiro's essays on individual think-

Indeed, Schapiro reads *The Old Masters* itself like a personal object. In Fromentin's rejection of Rembrandt, for example, he uncovers the root of Fro-



ity in the painting." In a way, by studying Fromentin, Schapiro investigates the origins of his own sensibility. In his influential essay, "Recent Abstract Painting," which appeared in 1957, he had declared paintings to be "the last handmade, personal objects within our culture"; and in passages such as the one on Munch's off-center portrait likeness, Schapiro discovered the picture as a person.

mentin's mediocrity as a painter. According to Schapiro, Fromentin censured Rembrandt for his "far-reading arbitrariness" and his "unwillingness to be reasonable and consistent"; but it was Fromentin himself, impulsive in his youth but rigid in his old age, who was on trial here. In his impetuous decision, in writing *The Old Masters*, to turn from painting to writing about painting, Fromentin redeemed his better and former self, even if Rembrandt had to bear the brunt of his self-loathing. Schapiro is himself a talented painter (in this respect, too, he is a rarity among art historians), and it is impossible to read his great essay on Fromentin without recognizing a powerful description of the nobility and the ambivalence of the artist turned critic.

If Fromentin's paintings, "exotic in theme and classical in mood," were behind the times in the 1870s, if they were stalled in the artist's youthful memories of Africa and in the painterly manner in which he was trained, his personal and spontaneous account of his experiences of Dutch art recorded in *The Old Masters* is, as Schapiro puts it beautifully, "an early example of what might be called plein-air criticism." The phrase is typical of Schapiro's own epiphanous writing. It illuminates the entirety of Fromentin's context in a single flash: *The Old Masters*, we suddenly see, is the original, written equivalent of Impressionist art.

Schapiro knows that contexts are always fraught with conflicts, and his essay closes with an analysis of Fromentin's critical rejection of the Impressionist painters themselves. It is the old story about the indifference of the art historian to the art of his own day; or, as Schapiro writes, "how difficult is insight into a new contemporary art, especially if it belongs to a generation younger than one's own." Even as he exemplified a revolutionary aesthetic sensibility in his encounter with old Dutch art, the great French critic condemned the line from Courbet to Monet, betraying in this case the usual stubbornness of "official" taste encountering the new. Like Berenson's selfish aestheticism, Fromentin's blindness to the present became, for Schapiro, a cautionary example.

While Schapiro writes brilliantly on his lesser foils, he is weaker on his modern intellectual equals, as if he must reserve for art his supreme openness to expressions of the age. In the long 1968 essay "Freud and Leonardo: An Art Historical Study," he takes to task Freud's little book *A Childhood Reminiscence of Leonardo da Vinci* (1910). Recalling that,

as early as 1923, the philological basis for this psychoanalytic treatment of the artist had been proven fatally flawed, Schapiro systematically refutes all of Freud's conclusions. Those who like to see Freud's arguments demolished may take pleasure in Schapiro's learned criticism, but it will come as no surprise. Nor will it explain why Freud remains, after so many such demolitions, one of the great and positive challenges to the discipline.

It would be a mistake to dismiss Schapiro's account as by now beside the point. In his commitment to empirical facts and to logical reasoning, Schapiro might not be as amenable to the contemporary culture of "theory" as many of his admirers think. He reserves his celebration of the imagination for creative artists and upholds for his own discipline the ideal (as he writes in a largely negative review in 1936 of the work, brilliant but in his view too-speculative, of the Second Vienna School of art history) "scientific vigor." His tastes in psychological explanations tend toward the neurological, as evidenced by his lifelong interest in the psychology of perception and the experimental work of Kurt Goldstein. And it should be remembered that when he challenged Breton to a debate on the coherence of the term "dialectical materialism," the philosophers whom he chose to argue his case where not Marxist dialecticians such as Adorno or Horkheimer, but philosophers of science and logicians such as Ernst Nagel and A.J. Ayer. Breton and his rather more spacy teammates left the discussion converted, according to Schapiro, and they never used the term again.

Nowhere is Schapiro's commitment to reason and rational analysis more apparent (and more appealing) than in his little piece, from 1967, on Heidegger, originally published in a festschrift for Goldstein. Staging itself as a mere "note" amending Heidegger's interpretation of a painting of shoes by van Gogh, it not only mocked the pretentiousness of the German philosopher's essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935), it also presciently detected Heidegger's underlying allegiance to a politics of reaction.

Heidegger took van Gogh's painting of shoes to illustrate how art gives us our idea of "equipment." Moreover, by showing what shoes "really" are, van Gogh's picture (thus Heidegger) also reveals what truth is. Truth is not, as science would have it, that which is opposed to falsehood; it is an unhiddenness (*aletheia*, in Greek) revealed in the event of the immediate experience

of art. In Heidegger, the picture elicits a barrage of purple prose in which the philosopher thinks himself into the shoes of a Dutch peasant woman and sees there, according to Heidegger, "the uncomplaining anxiety about the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the advent of birth and the shivering at the surrounding menace of death" and so forth. Then, to make matters worse, Heidegger rejects any criticism that he has "imagined everything thus and projected it into the painting." On the contrary, he asserts, "van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant's shoes, is in truth."

Schapiro, recalling the actual picture to which Heidegger must have referred, sets out to prove that those shoes are not peasant footwear at all, that they are the artist's own shoes, which van Gogh is recorded as having portrayed several times. Heidegger's reading is thus exposed as having indeed "imagined everything," and as doing so, according to Schapiro, because of "his own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and earthy." Against Heidegger's account, with its links to the *völkisch*, blood-and-soil ideology of Nazism that the philosopher is now known to have embraced, Schapiro sets the democratizing image of the urban artist as representative of the individual, who observes in his shoes "a portion of himself." And against Heidegger's view that truth is "revealed" immediately and absolutely, in a way that admits no argument, Schapiro sets the Enlightenment values of reason and fact.

Schapiro's simple and powerful objection became the subject of a massive and extremely difficult text by Jacques Derrida. *Restitutions*, published in 1978, was once delivered by Derrida in New York, with Schapiro in the audience. Composed of a series of fragments meant to be spoken in different voices, it reopens the dispute between Schapiro and Heidegger over whose shoes it is that "in truth" van Gogh depicts. Derrida observes that, despite Schapiro's circumstantial evidence about the picture's subject, there is no way of ascertaining whether they are the artists or a peasant's, or even whether they constitute a pair; and he rightly points out that there exists a strong *völkisch* strain in van Gogh's art. More broadly, Derrida calls into question both the philosopher's project of anonymous rustic belonging and the historian's "fact" of artistic ownership and self-portraiture. Both "restitutions," according to Derrida, are equally founded in a ground-

less metaphysics of presence. Both see living subjects where there are only objects, and it is this mystification, this desire, that Derrida famously seeks to deconstruct.

Schapiro has added "Further Notes on Heidegger and van Gogh," dated 1994, yet he makes no mention—not even in a footnote—of Derrida's influential criticism. This is unfortunate, not least because Derrida's obtuse argument is more representative of the contemporary approach to art than Schapiro's. The so-called decentering of the subject, the project of treating authorship, ownership, individual freedom and the like as blinding, contingent fictions, indeed as false "effects" of art's enchantment, dominates much of today's art criticism and art. Schapiro's celebration of artistic creativity as emblematic of human freedom, which runs through all his writings and shines especially in his celebration of Abstract Expressionism, is out of place in postmodern culture. Derrida's vision of shoes without owners, as of paintings without artists and texts without authors, and his impostured literary style, which renders distastefully ambiguous the pairing of Heidegger the Nazi with Schapiro the Jew, poses a challenge that Schapiro, more than most art historians, might have powerfully answered.

Perhaps, though, Schapiro was right to let the matter stand. For in fact Derrida's text no longer asks the questions that are central to the study of art today. Many scholars now yearn for a new, critically informed empiricism that makes clear, judicious distinctions between fact and fiction. Whether or not this nostalgia for objectivity is one more mark of the intellectual resignation of the 1990s, there is something deeply satisfying about reading Schapiro just now. In the skill with which he tackles such imponderables as "style," "perfection" and "unity" with intelligence and learning, yet free of the mass of critical authorities that burdens all serious methodological writing these days, and in the daring with which he rethinks, on his own, old but vexed categories like "format," "frame" and "direction," Schapiro is a model for us all.

He teaches, by example, the virtue of self-reliance. It was self-reliance, after all, that enabled Schapiro early on to study art that no one else wished to understand; that preserved his political integrity, when, during the 1930s, he broke with many friends on the left in protest over Stalin's show trials; that provided that independence of judgment that allowed him to champion experimental masters such as Pollock and

de Kooning; that enabled him, in his art history, to conquer the sense of lateness, the perceived fall into the quotidian, that troubles all theoretical writing after modernism. The recollection of first principles is the fountain of Schapiro's eternal youth. As Emerson said, in his great account of self-reliance, "To

believe your own thought ... that is genius."

JOSEPH LEO KOERNER is professor of art history at Harvard University and the author most recently of *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (University of Chicago Press).

Gutter Populist

BY JACKSON LEARS

Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity by Neal Gabler

(Knopf, 681 pp., \$30)

A specter is haunting America: the specter of pseudopopulism. From Rush Limbaugh to Camille Paglia, from nativist congressional claquees to politically correct cultural studies programs, participants in public debate are desperate to claim that their hearts beat as one with the pulse of the people. To be sure, the definition of the people ranges from lesbians of color to heterosexuals of paler hue, but the object of wrath is everywhere the same: "elitists."

On the right or the left, elitism is almost always defined in cultural terms rather than economic ones. This robs the epithet of meaning. It allows Newt Gingrich to rail against "liberal elitists" and "counterculture McGoverniks" while he implicitly identifies bankers and real estate developers with the salt of the earth. The same sleight of hand operates more benignly among Gingrich's bitterest foes on the postmodern left: critics and theorists who treat corporate-sponsored entertainment as a direct expression of popular taste, and see a populist impulse in television sitcoms and tabloid newspapers. Gingrich's raving oddly resonates with the hipper-than-thou rhapsody of the media studies maven. Both are ignorant of, or willfully indifferent about, questions of power; both stigmatize effete intellectuals who are allegedly out of step with the rhythms of popular sentiment; both equate an in-your-face attitude with an egalitarian testament. Pseudopopulism, in short, is loose in the land. It infects cultural inquiry as well as public policy debate, and it is turning our political discourse into a maniacal babble.

At first glance, Neal Gabler's biography of Walter Winchell seems a welcome exception to all this blather. Gabler can

write, and tell a good story; he is not immune to the pull of institutions or the play of power relations. He places his enormously influential subject within a dense network of vaudevillians, newspapermen, showgirls, movie stars, politicians and Broadway wise guys, many of them fascinating characters. On a broad canvas, he sympathetically traces the gossip columnist's rise from obscure thespian to pal of presidents and his gradual descent into cranky marginality. Winchell's story nicely coincides with that familiar epic tale, "America's Rise to World Power," and it illuminates the cultural history of the mid-twentieth century.

But finally Gabler's book, too, succumbs to pseudopopulism. In the spirit of his subject, he paints Winchell as a tragic populist hero who falls from grace: a champion of ordinary folks during the New Deal who turns to McCarthyite red-baiting after World War II, whose friends gradually abandon him and who dies alone and virtually forgotten. Unfortunately, neither the populism nor the tragedy is convincing.

This may be due partly to the exigencies of the biographer's craft. You invite a man into your house to stay for several years, and once he arrives you're stuck with him. Midway through the project, even if you begin to realize that your subject is a son of a bitch, you're still stuck with him. So you must put the best face on things. One way is to claim that your subject's private shortcomings were outweighed by his public leadership. "Winchell, thou shouldst be living at this hour," Gabler might say. The problem is that Winchell, if he were living at this hour, would be allying himself with the most mindless and authoritarian strands in our political culture. One could easily

imagine his tipping off the FBI about suspected marijuana use in Hollywood, ruining reputations and distorting confirmation hearings with rumors about marital indiscretions, convicting defendants before they had a shot at a fair trial. He would certainly be cheering the Gingrichian assault on "liberal elitists."

All that Winchell would add to contemporary civilization is a particularly bullying version of A.M. radio talk. Still, even if we are well rid of Winchell, there is no doubt that the man's historical significance warrants a biography. He was, in his awful way, a pioneer. He played a central role in the spread of pack journalism. Gabler calls this "the culture of celebrity." Of course, criticisms of celebrity culture are a dime a dozen among journalists and academics; complaints that "image" has supplanted "reality" are the stuff of "essays" on "The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour." Yet Winchell should remind us all of just how repellent, even dangerous, celebrity culture can be, particularly in its pseudo-populist form.

To anyone reading the early chapters of Gabler's book, this charge will seem absurd and unfair. In Gabler's account, Winchell's destructive capacity emerges only gradually. As a young man Winchell seems virtually indistinguishable—apart from his good looks and his stage presence—from any other ambitious and spirited young man from the Lower East Side circa 1915. He was born into a Russian Jewish family named Weinscel, Winscel or Winchel, depending on the patriarch of the moment and the extent of his Anglicizing inclinations. Young Walter inherited what Gabler calls the family "curse of expectation"—the insistent longing for money, gentility, status. Throughout his life, his favorite song was "Papa We Gotta Move Uptown."

One way up, for him as for many Jewish boys, was vaudeville. By the time he was 13, he was opening as one of a troupe of seven singing newsboys at the Hudson Theater in Union Hill, New Jersey. For the next decade, Winchell was on the road, touring the music halls with ensemble companies such as *School Days* in places like Butte, Montana, and Bay City, Michigan. Among the *School Days* hoofers, he was smitten by Rita Greene, who became his dancing partner and (after weeks of proposals from Winchell) his wife. She gave him the second "I" in his name and a typewriter.

During downtime on the road, Winchell got in the habit of banging out dry witticisms, complaints about management's treatment and gossip, and then posting the paragraphs back-

stage as "Daily Newssense." Typical contributions: "Most actors are married, then live scrappily ever after"; "Seen outside of Cleveland movie theater: 'Geraldine Farrar supported for the first time by her husband.'" The pattern of his later career was already being set: when he wrote that "Bill J. and Ernestine O'B. are making whoopie," Bill J. (allegedly) decked him.

As it turned out, Bill J. had the right idea. Winchell's squibs soon attracted attention back in New York and eventually earned him a column in *Vaudeville News*. As he acquired influence on Broadway, his megalomania accelerated. He loved to be courted by vaudevilians eager for a favorable mention. As Rita caustically remembered, "He could go into minute detail of what people said about him, how he was doing, what a wonder he was, life was just one grand compliment for W.W." Within a few months Rita left, though she and Winchell saw each other sporadically for years. Walter, meanwhile, fell for June Aster, a dancer from Mississippi whom he married in 1923 without bothering to divorce Rita. (The divorce was finally arranged in 1928.)

At about the same time he remarried, Winchell also went to work for the *Daily Graphic*. This enormously successful tabloid was launched by the bodybuilder and health food faddist Bernarr MacFadden, who could give even Winchell lessons in megalomania. MacFadden specialized in stories of eloping heiresses, absconding brokers, divorcing couples and unmarried mothers. His most enduring and dubious contribution to journalism was the "composograph" or composite photo, which spliced pictures of models with those of individuals in the news, allowing the paper to present "actual photographs" of the events whether it had sent a photographer or not.

Winchell was right up MacFadden's alley. He had the same disregard for accuracy and the same taste for blending titillation with sentimentality. These traits served Winchell well, even after he left the *Graphic* in 1929 for Hearst's more respectable *Mirror*. Most of his material was boilerplate gossip, which seems tame enough today but was still perfectly capable of ruining relationships and reputations. But Winchell also went in for more serious charges when it suited his purposes.

"I wonder if they are in league with the Reds?" he said of Prince and Princess Matchabelli, the perfume manufacturers, on one of his early radio broadcasts.

I say, I wonder—because I know that prince Vasili, a newview [sic] of the Czar [.] is now

working for the Matchabellis who are in the perfume racket now, times being what they are. And anyway—any kin of the Czar (who was murdered by the Revolutionists you know) certainly doesn't want to help them now. I know I wouldn't. The Czar's nevwiew, they would have me believe, brought with him all the secret formulas for perfumes that were in the Romanoff tribe. But as Mack of Moran and Mack would say, "Ah, wouldn't like it even if it wuz good!"

This is a good example of the meandering, allogical innuendo that Winchell used to damage reputations. Take away his media access, as he once realized in a fleeting, youthful moment of self-knowledge, and he was about as cogent as a loudmouth in a bar.

In 1932 he was correctly identified as "a thug and a bully" (Gabler's phrase) by Marlen Pew of *Editor and Publisher*. Winchell set his informants to work on Pew's past. They discovered that Pew had once accused a Philadelphia politician of bribing a juror, and was temporarily jailed for criminal libel. Pew had criticized Republican attempts to cover up the Teapot Dome scandal, and he believed that the jailing was an attempt to intimidate him into silence. The case never went to trial. Winchell's version of the story, Gabler writes, was that "Pew had been convicted of libel and had drawn the wrath of the Republican Party for his intemperate attacks on the president." Winchell concluded that Pew "is hardly qualified to appoint himself as dictator of American journalistic ethics." Pew took a page to set the record straight, and Winchell sneered: "When a man takes more than five minutes denying anything—he *must* be guilty!" Then Winchell deflected the debate away from fundamental issues of truth and falsity, and onto the safer terrain of cultural politics. The whole conflict, he claimed, boiled down to a fight between "a veteran of the Old-Fashioned School of journalism and an upstart representing the New School." Not only were the old-fogies guilty as charged in the court of tabloid opinion; they were out of step with the parade of pop-culture democracy.

There is something both familiar and nauseating about Winchell's mixture of prurience and moralism. It is the same blend that dominates tabloids and television today. In claiming to speak for "the people" from his penthouse on Central Park West, in attacking the "old-fashioned fogies" of the journalistic establishment while he kissed the behinds of the politically powerful, Winchell could justly be recognized as the father of pseudopopulism.

Gabler wants us to see Winchell's story

as a personal tragedy and an important piece of cultural history. The first claim is the more problematic. As a struggling young vaudevillian Winchell cuts an attractive figure, but by the 1920s, when he had become the dictator of Broadway, Winchell comes across as a vile and petty man, obsessed with avenging himself against imagined slights and injuries, yet willing to damage any other reputation in the interest of coming in under deadline with a bit of gossip. To be sure, he had his pitiable moments (as when his adopted 10-year-old daughter Gloria died of leukemia), but what tyrant doesn't?

By and large, Winchell never rises high enough to have a tragic fall, Gabler's efforts at persuasion notwithstanding. Previewing his account of the late '40s and early '50s, when Winchell finally slid from popularity and influence, Gabler writes: "The end came 'drop by drop,' as Aeschylus has described the pain that slowly falls upon the heart and brings wisdom." Every disappointment, every career setback, is then prefaced with a tedious "drop by drop." Enough already. No one would deny that Winchell experienced pain (like many of the people whose reputations he wrecked); but there is no evidence here that it brought him any wisdom. As late as 1965, Winchell was forced to terminate the services of his assistant Herman Klurfeld, who had been pulling his chestnuts out of the fire for twenty-seven years. Winchell, still making nearly \$60,000 a year in salary after decades in six figures, gave Klurfeld no severance pay, no retirement benefits and an utterly perfunctory letter of recommendation to future employers. "I thought you were like a son to him," Mrs. Klurfeld said. "And he was like a son of a bitch to me," Mr. Klurfeld replied.

Gabler's attempt to make Winchell's ugly life into a tragedy distorts the broader historical dimensions of the book. He wants to celebrate the columnist as a larger-than-life icon of "cultural democracy," whose use of street slang in the tabloid *Daily Graphic* provided "a way for the disenfranchised to reclaim their language from the genteel elites." Like other pseudopopulists, Gabler confuses a revolt against gentility with a revolt against power. This muddle diverts populist rage away from executive suites and toward more vulnerable targets, such as the book-lined studies of uptight "traditionalists." Anti-intellectualism becomes a substitute for political criticism, in Gabler's inflation of the tabloids' significance: "To be seen reading the *Graphic* or the *Mirror*

or the *Daily News* was a stamp of disreputability, and the readers, like the papers themselves, bore it proudly as an assertion of their own power."

This is an appealing fantasy, but it won't hold up. Wise guys can be funny, as anyone knows who has seen *Guys and Dolls* or bought a car in New Jersey. But a smart-ass assault on pretentiousness is not a demonstration of power. The street-smart style of urban immigrants injected a dose of vitality into American culture, but the style itself could be adapted to any political stance. It was the confused, amoral flexibility of pseudopopulism that permitted an autocrat like Winchell to pose as a tribune of the people.

Gabler accepts this pose at face value. In his account, by the mid-1930s, the impact of the Great Depression had transformed Winchell from a Broadway *bon vivant* to "an avenging angel for the dispossessed." As evidence for this claim, Gabler notes that Winchell "could be especially rough on petty bureaucrats"—on heartless relief administrators, for example, or local magistrates, such as the judge who sentenced a destitute father, desperately seeking food for his family, to thirty days for shooting a duck without a license. Maybe these were worthy targets, but they did not include the wealthy, prominent and powerful people whose favor Winchell craved. Too often Gabler mistakes Winchell's crass opportunism, his love of money and power, for some sort of democratic commitment.

As a young vaudevillian, Winchell might be pardoned his chronic insecurity about money. By 1936, however, when he announced to the assembled sycophants at the Stork Club that he was at last a millionaire, the highest paid journalist in the United States, Gabler's constant references to Winchell's financial anxieties wear a bit thin. Worries about money became Winchell's ready excuse for ignoring his wife's pleas to spend more time with her and the children, while he shunted them off to country estates in Connecticut and vacations in Miami Beach. His two biological children became the classic poor little rich kids, financially sated and emotionally forsaken. (Both eventually committed suicide.) Meanwhile, Winchell was holding forth at the Stork Club.

It is a cheap shot to blame Winchell for the way his kids turned out. It is foolish to suggest that "parenting" could overcome the arbitrary plans of fate. But Winchell presents a special case. His delight in the devious exercise of power was his single overmastering trait. It led

him to cozy up to J. Edgar Hoover; it energized his bullying attempts to discipline his children. Winchell's megalomania merged his public persona with his private experience.

The two realms came together most clearly when Winchell used federal power to settle family scores. In 1947, when his 20-year-old daughter Walda took up with Billy Cahn, a sometime Broadway producer and shady character, Walter immediately assumed Cahn was after the Winchell fortune. He "hounded Cahn unmercifully," Gabler reports, in his column; he undermined Walda's acting career (secretly, of course); and finally he and June had Walda committed temporarily to a mental institution through connivance with a local judge, despite Cahn's efforts to stop them. Cahn eventually drifted out of Walda's life, but Winchell never forgave him for falling in love with Walda. Years later Winchell succeeded in ruining Cahn's life; he persuaded Hoover to put the FBI to work locating irregularities in Cahn's background. The Bureau eventually dug up enough dirt for the IRS to bring tax evasion charges against the hapless drifter, who finally fled to Israel.

The incident typified Winchell's love affair with power, and his appropriation and trivialization of public authority for personal ends. He liked to ride around in cop cars (there would be work for him on the Fox network today), and to convict accused murderers in the press before they were tried in court. That was what he did to Bruno Hauptmann, the man who was eventually executed for kidnapping the Lindbergh baby in 1935. Winchell was braying of Hauptmann's guilt for weeks before the jury even began to deliberate, indeed before the trial even began. Gabler upbraids the columnist for his tendency to "turn tragedy into entertainment," but the problem was much worse than that: Winchell displayed a complete disregard for the presumption of innocence. In the mid-1960s Dr. Sam Sheppard, a Cleveland osteopath accused of murdering his pregnant wife, won a new trial and acquittal when the Supreme Court found that press reporting had made a fair trial impossible; Sheppard's attorney cited Winchell as one of the chief offenders. Despite such small victories, the disregard for the presumption of innocence has become a key feature of pack journalism. We now have statistical polls regarding the guilt or innocence of defendants. Winchell, the champion of mass-mediated opinion, would have approved.

To be fair, not all the columnist's forays into the public arena had pernicious

results. His Jewishness made Winchell acutely sensitive to anti-Semitism, in international politics as in everyday life. He recognized the menace posed by Hitler earlier than any other mass-market journalist. According to Gabler, during the late 1930s Winchell's anti-Nazi commitments combined with his "populist" sympathies to reinforce his devotion to Franklin Delano Roosevelt; but this claim overstates Winchell's political knowledge and convictions.

What really drew Winchell to Roosevelt was not a political philosophy, it was an opportunity to suck up to power. The columnist's understanding of the New Deal or foreign policy was minimal to nonexistent. The true allure was intimacy with "the commander in chief," the decisive leader, the man who could compel subordinates to absolute obedience in an emergency. This was the period in which Winchell was cementing his relationship with Hoover, the commander in chief on the domestic front, by feeding the FBI the names of suspicious people whose alleged "subversive activities" were little more than rumors. Except for Truman, whom Winchell hated and falsely accused of Klan membership, Roosevelt's presidential successors continued to inspire a quasi-military respect in Winchell.

More royalist than the king, Winchell combined his reverence for government power with the officially sanctioned chauvinism of the era, which celebrated the American Way of Life in WPA murals and *Saturday Evening Post* covers. This combination remained a constant in his character from the 1930s through the 1960s. It linked the sycophant of Franklin Roosevelt with the sycophant of Joe McCarthy. And after McCarthy's fall, when Winchell had become (in Gabler's words) "an angry, mean, foolish old man railing at the fates that had betrayed him," he still could not resist the allure of Commander in Chief Johnson. He became a strident apologist for the Vietnam War—a Vegas patriot, gray and broken down, skulking in the shadows of the tan and sleek Sinatra.

Winchell's career epitomized the creation of pseudopopulist style: the appropriation and the standardization of demotic culture by the elite purveyors of mass entertainment. He began in the vernacular of vaudeville, but he gradually became habituated to the blander and more predictable idioms of corporate-sponsored culture. His writing lost the variety and the unpredictability of everyday speech, as it slid into staccato self-parody. Winchell stopped listening to the people whom he was supposed to

have represented: "the waiters, the cab drivers, the cigarette girls, the honky-tonk acts, the abused, the Broadway halt and the Broadway lame." By the time he rose to prominence, he could not have listened to them, even if he had wanted to; the sound of his own voice drowned

out everything else on the premises, unless he was in the precincts of power. Enough of this chatter about populism.

JACKSON LEARS's *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* was recently published by Basic Books.

Porn on the Fourth of July

By CASS R. SUNSTEIN

Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights by Nadine Strossen

(Scribner, 320 pp., \$22)

Nadine Strossen is the president of the American Civil Liberties Union, and the ACLU has strong opinions about pornography. In its view, just about any restrictions on pornography are a bad idea, and a violation of the United States Constitution. This book, a real barn-burner, marshals almost every imaginable argument against restricting pornography. What is distinctive about *Defending Pornography* is that its author identifies herself not just as a strong opponent of "censorship," but also as a strong feminist: a feminist who wants to defend, and even to celebrate, pornography. Her intention is to respond to people who think that pornography should be regulated—or even criticized—on feminist grounds.

Strossen offers three arguments. First, she makes strictly legal claims and urges that restrictions on pornography amount to an infringement of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Even people who agree with Strossen will find, I think, that this is the weakest part of the book—windy, rhetorical, one-sided. Then Strossen turns policymaker and claims that any restrictions would be unhelpful and counterproductive; here she makes some noteworthy points about what she sees as the likely effects of real-world enforcement policies. And finally, and in some ways most interestingly, Strossen appears as sociologist, even sexologist. Here, she joins company with a number of other women who are concerned about the "cult of victimization," notably Katie Roiphe and Christina Hoff Sommers. Strossen defends her belief that women are agents, not just victims, in the world of sex as everywhere else. Strossen explores what she sees as the many valuable functions of pornography, in giving

people pleasure and helping them to learn about their sexuality and to express an important aspect of themselves.

But we need to back up a bit, and to ask why some people think that it is legitimate or appropriate to regulate some sexually explicit materials. As a matter of law, such materials have never received full constitutional protection. The most familiar argument, accepted by the courts since the nineteenth century, invoked the need to protect traditional morality. The Supreme Court refined this argument in 1973, when the Court concluded that some materials ("obscenity") can be regulated under three conditions: (a) if, taken as a whole and under contemporary community standards, they appeal to the prurient interest; (b) if they depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by state law; and (c) if, taken as a whole, they lack serious social value. These materials—according to the Supreme Court—are far from the "core" of the free speech guarantee and may be regulated on the basis of a lesser showing of harm, that is, they may be regulated without a demonstration of the likely "threat of imminent lawless action" required for regulation of political speech. The Court said that a legislature might believe that such materials "have a tendency to exert a corrupting and debasing impact leading to anti-social behavior."

Emphasizing corruption and debasement, many conservatives (and not a few liberals, too) think that it is legitimate for a community to fear that at least some kinds of commercial exploitation of sex will have unfortunate effects on social attitudes and practices. Some critics worry that any restrictions on ob-

scenity will lead to a widespread censorship; and grotesque incidents of censorship have occurred in American history, perhaps most notably and most disgracefully with the attempted suppression of *Ulysses*. Since 1973, however, the Supreme Court has understood the category of regulable material to be very narrow, and prosecutors who suffer from "sex panic" (Strossen's term) will lose most of their cases. Realistically speaking, the Court's standard is restricted to a small category of "hard core" pornography. Do not be misled by the shameful and heavily publicized prosecutions of Robert Mapplethorpe and 2 Live Crew; there is just about no possibility, under the Court's understanding of its own standard, that such prosecutions could result in judicially affirmed convictions.

In the last twenty years or so, some feminists, most famously Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, have argued for regulation of some sexually explicit materials, but on a different rationale. They urge that the real problem with such materials is not that they are inconsistent with community values, but that they can produce more tangible harms, especially (though not only) to women. Some of the women who participate in pornography are victims of violence and abuse, and it is hard to prevent such violence without regulating pornography as well. Moreover, there is evidence that some pornography can incite violence against women. (This is not a claim that sexual violence would disappear without pornography, or that most or even many men who are exposed to pornography will commit acts of violence; it is a claim about aggregate rates of violence.) Finally, it is argued that pornography is associated with various forms of degrading and unequal treatment, some of it—like sexual harassment—unlawful.

All of these claims are widely disputed, of course, as an empirical matter (Strossen disputes them vigorously), and people disagree about what ought to be done even if pornography can be associated with real-world harms. Some people think that the particular proposals offered by MacKinnon and Dworkin are too vague or too broad, and would be willing to consider narrower versions. What is most important and most interesting is the emphasis on a certain kind of harm, and in particular the emphasis on materials that are sexually abusive rather than sexually explicit.

Now we may consider Strossen's legal argument. To qualify as a genuine legal argument rather than a policy proposal, her claim should be based, at least to a

degree, on a reading of the Constitution's text and history, and on an encounter with analogous cases both ways. But even like-minded readers will find that Strossen disappoints on these counts. Briefly, her argument takes the following form. The text of the First Amendment says that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech." She points out that there is no textual exception for sexually explicit materials. Yet the Supreme Court has consistently—and in her view illegitimately—read an exception into the First Amendment.

Strossen thinks that this is especially bad in light of her judgment that pornography is "political." For her, pornography is a form of dissent; and the censorship of pornography is therefore no different from the censorship of political speech, which the Court would not allow. And once we start on the project of censoring sexually explicit materials, there is no logical stopping point. Everything is at grave risk: not just Robert Mapplethorpe, not just Lina Wertmüller, and not just Debbie Reynolds, but also classical music and even, Strossen thinks, the Bible itself.

This is a lawyer's brief, and it isn't at all convincing. Like a bombastic talk radio host, Strossen does not present counterarguments except in their most absurd form, and she does not investigate distinctions that might complicate her own view or lead to intermediate positions. Strossen does not, in fact, give us a full account of her position on the legal issue. She seems to think that sexually explicit speech deserves absolute protection as a matter of constitutional law; and she seems unaware that this is not a simple position to defend. Would Strossen really protect the distribution of any and all child pornography (involving, say, movies with children who are 12 years old, or 8 years old, or 4 years old)? In the name of the Constitution, would she ban states from restricting the time and place when unwilling viewers could be exposed, say, to billboards and subway posters showing child pornography, or acts that are violent and sexually explicit? If Strossen patiently confronted these questions, her argument would be easier to understand and to evaluate; but she doesn't like to deal with hard questions that might draw her absolutism into doubt.

Now ask whether the text of the First Amendment really leads where Strossen wants to go. (For charity's sake, put aside the embarrassing fact that the First Amendment applies only to Congress, not to other government bodies; this is a large problem for Strossen and

other literalists, and it is dodged in her book by an uninformative footnote.) Strossen's main argument—that the text of the amendment contains "no exceptions"—could be made about the vast array of cases in which government now controls speech without getting many people upset. Consider the fact that government regulates, among other things, unlicensed medical or legal advice; false or misleading commercial advertisements; tobacco and alcohol advertising even if truthful; libel, especially private libel; fraudulent real estate deals; obscene telephone calls; attempted bribery; perjury; and threats, including threats to assassinate the president.

Are all of these troublesome "exceptions" to the First Amendment? In truth, they should not be viewed as "exceptions" at all, certainly if we read the text historically. But Strossen says hardly a word about history. It is a surprising gap in a book in part about the meaning of the Constitution; but if we care about history, we will see that the constitutional term "freedom of speech" was not originally understood to include everything that someone might want to say. It had a narrower and more specialized meaning. Some people think the clause applied principally to prepublication restraints; others think it allowed a distinction between "liberty" and "license." In any case, it is hard indeed to find absolutism in the relevant history.

Maybe Strossen believes that the text should be read entirely apart from its history. But absolutist platitudes notwithstanding, the text has never been understood to include whatever people might want to use words to say, and it is unlikely that Strossen herself really reads it that way. In view of the many cases in which government legitimately regulates expression, free speech absolutism is an illusion, and people who believe that pornography deserves absolute protection should explain if or why, on their view, the government can punish the many forms of speech that it regulates every day. The argument cannot be carried simply by brandishing the word "censorship."

Strossen may want to make distinctions among categories of speech, to claim that regulable speech causes serious and immediate harm, whereas sexually explicit speech does not (though this argument runs into trouble when we consider that a lot of regulated speech, including, for example, much unlicensed medical advice, and many threats that cannot realistically be carried out, are not necessarily harmful). Perhaps she can show, as others have

tried to show, why sexually explicit speech usually or always deserves protection, while libel and misleading commercial speech and threats and uncensored medical advice and attempted bribery do not. But sympathetic readers will be disappointed to see that Strossen doesn't even try to do this. Instead she rests on the authority of a legal abstraction that can't do the work.

Nor is it helpful for Strossen to claim that pornography is "political," a term that she does not define. Maybe pornography is political in the sense that it appeals to political outsiders and dissidents; maybe it is political in the sense that it expresses a view on what is good and right; maybe it is political in the sense that it is (sometimes? often?) sexist. But if speech that is political in these ways is protected by the First Amendment, then a lot of speech apparently counts as political—including,

for example, attempted bribery of a public official, and misleading commercial speech, and child pornography, and threats to assassinate the president. Strossen does not grapple with these problems, either.

Legally, then, Strossen's claims are weak. But on the policy issue—"Should we regulate pornography?" as opposed to, "Does the Constitution permit regulation of pornography?"—she is more successful and raises a number of worthy points. Strossen urges feminists who support anti-pornography laws to worry about how such laws will work in the real world. She thinks that any such laws will be too vague. In Strossen's view, it is impossible to define a regulable category of sexually explicit material without also allowing regulation of material that ought not, on any view, to be suppressed; for example, education about AIDS, or about sex in general, will be at risk.

Strossen thinks, too, that any enforcement efforts would be directed against people who are already weak or unpopular. She fears that such laws will not be used against women who have perhaps been harmed by pornography, but instead against homosexuals, who, in her view, benefit from pornography. (Again and again Strossen seems to think it decisive, against any argument for regulating pornography, that some homosexual materials might be endangered. I am not sure why she thinks this.) She points out as well that suppression of sex-related speech has not usually worked to the benefit of women, and that the most sexually unequal societies are especially concerned to cabin and to control women's sexuality.

Strossen is right to say that any efforts to regulate sexually explicit material—traditionalist, feminist or something else—will raise hard problems of definition. Enforcement efforts may also go awry. Still, there are problems with Strossen's arguments. First, and in spite of what Strossen says, the existing legal standard really doesn't have a high degree of open-endedness. True, the relevant terms—"prurient interest," "patently offensive," "serious social value"—could mean, in the abstract, just about anything at all; but in the abstract almost all words could mean just about anything at all, and we can't have laws without words. As the legal standard has been worked out, it allows regulation of very little, indeed a narrowly defined class of materials. Under the current standard, the difficulties of vagueness and excessive breadth are not nearly so drastic as Strossen thinks. (This is not a defense of the current standard, which is problematic, I think, insofar as it allows offense to be a basis for regulating speech.) Along similar lines, it is surprising to find that Strossen does not adequately investigate the experience of other nations, including Germany, Spain, France and England, at least some of which regulate some sexually explicit materials without endangering Mapplethorpe or 2 Live Crew, not to mention classical music or the Bible.

Moreover, I am not sure why Strossen thinks that the new feminist anti-pornography efforts are so much more troublesome than the old traditionalist view. Time and again Strossen shows contempt for what she calls the "MacDworkinite" concept, but the contempt isn't earned. Many people who are uncertain about or disagree with MacKinnon and Dworkin are happy to acknowledge that if speech is to be regulated, it is a lot better to point to real-world harms than to invoke the commu-

The Blue Mountains

When a deacon in their church dreamt God would burn Portland,
my wife's niece and her German husband
packed everything they could into a Plymouth van.
It was one of those Sodom-and-Gomorrahs things
and they were seventeen and twenty,
with a two-year-old son.

A hundred miles north there was a poor motel
and behind it a bony lake sprawling between mountains.
Twin beds, a shower, a pay phone
outside the office.
The news came in on a black and white Philco.

Portland had fires, of course —
a tanker flipped on the interstate,
a drunk on the west side fell asleep smoking.
But at the end of the week,
their money spent, their jobs in the wind,
the city was spared.

Mostly now they talk about the owls,
and the jostle of the boat as they rowed the lake,
the little wind, the pinched stars and the closing dark.
There were leaping trout too
and the baby crying to stand in the boat,
but mostly it's the owls, great horned or gray, heralding
those narrow passes,
bright as trumpets, far and farther.

DAVID BOTTOMS

nity's offense. Many people believe that it is important to insist that women are not yet equal—in legislatures, in workplaces, in families—and that pornography is a problem because of its association with inequality, not least in sexual harassment.

Perhaps any effort to regulate sexually explicit materials on the basis of harm would produce special problems of vagueness and excessive breadth. But this depends on how the relevant legislation is written. It is even possible that the feminist argument, properly conceived, would result in less, not more, regulation of sexually explicit materials. The feminist argument, properly conceived, might encourage government to proceed against a subcategory of speech that is already regulable under current law. The feminist view might even make nonviolent or nonabusive materials totally immune from regulation (they are of course regulable under the prevailing traditionalist view). Everything depends on the particular way in which feminist goals are understood and translated into law.

Strossen believes that regulation with purportedly feminist goals would misfire. Maybe; but she doesn't have anything more than anecdotal evidence for this belief. She places a great emphasis on the Canadian experience, where acceptance of aspects of the feminist anti-pornography argument has, according to Strossen, resulted in controls on homosexual material. But it is far from clear that censorship of homosexual material has really been spurred by feminist anti-pornography efforts in Canada. Strossen's argument about likely enforcement policies is plausible, and it might be right, but we need to know a lot more to be sure. And enforcement problems might be somewhat reduced if enforcement authority is not given to criminal prosecutors but instead (as MacKinnon and Dworkin urge) to women who can prove actual harm in a civil proceeding before a jury.

In the most interesting sections of her book, Strossen joins the ranks of a diverse group of people who consider themselves committed feminists but protest what they see as an anti-sex "cult of victimization" within the current feminist movement. Strossen thinks that the anti-pornography movement is "anti-sex," and it is this purported feature of the movement that seems to bother her most. In pointing to the positive aspects of pornography, Strossen offers her only personal observation: "As a frequent traveler myself, I've noticed that many hotels all over the United States, including some of the finest, now offer sexu-

ally explicit videos for in-room viewing, a service that I have certainly enjoyed!"

Sounding a little like Camille Paglia, Strossen celebrates the "wonderful diversity of pornographic imagination." She claims that all sorts of depictions of sex, including rape scenes, can be really good for women, since "they go against the grain, thus allowing viewers to express rebellion and individuality." Strossen urges that people's sexual imaginations are very unruly. In her view, men and women alike, heterosexual and homosexual alike, can benefit from pornography insofar as they enjoy it and insofar as pornography permits them to figure out what they like and who they are.

There is a distinctive feminist dimension to Strossen's arguments. Strossen wants to say that women are active, not passive, agents, not victims, and that in sex, as in other things, women are able to act and to choose. On feminist grounds, Strossen thinks that the anti-pornography movement is ultimately damaging to women, because it makes them think that they are powerless, and because it prevents them from claiming and accepting their sexuality. "The courageous 'vagina-woman'—whose sexuality is synonymous with her strength—contrasts dramatically with the pro-censorship feminists' image of the cowering, cringing female whose sexuality is synonymous with her weakness." Thus Strossen thinks that the anti-pornography claims replicate pernicious old stereotypes, from earlier eras, about women's need for protection against sex.

There are some truths here, and Strossen is right to insist on them. People's imaginations are unruly. People's sexual interests need not be politically correct. Real-world violence should not be confused with descriptions of violence. The prospect of "sex police"—at least if these are understood as legal or social constraints on people's internal thoughts and desires—is unlikely to serve either liberty or equality. And much of what Strossen says about pornography and sexuality seems to speak to many women (and many men).

But there are some real oddities here, too, and the largest of them is that Strossen identifies opposition to pornography with opposition to sex. This is much too simple. All pornography is not the same, and all sex is not the same, and pornography and sex are not the same. Many people who raise questions about pornography, especially about violent or abusive pornography, are uncertain about legal controls on

pornographic materials, and they are very much in favor of consensual sex. They are concerned about rape and abuse; they don't think that a person's sexual capacities should be treated as objects for the use and control of others; and they don't believe that women's sexuality should be so treated in view of the extremely long association of this practice with second-class citizenship for women. In this light, it is much too coarse to say, as Strossen does, that rape scenes are liberating for women. I can't quite believe that this is her considered opinion.

To take these issues seriously, we don't need to draw easy distinctions between love and lust or the sacred and the profane, and we don't need to be sentimental or puritanical. We need only to reflect on some common aspects of human experience. It may be possible to argue, as some people do, that objectification and a form of use are substantial parts of sexual life, or wonderful parts of sexual life, or ineradicable parts of sexual life. Within a context of equality, respect and consent, objectification—not at all an easy word to define—may not be so troublesome. But Strossen doesn't engage this complicated matter. Thus she misses a big point of recent debates and makes things much too easy for herself.

So, too, the apparently overriding question of the 1990s—whether women are "agents" or "victims"—is impossible to answer in the abstract. Actually, it is a most peculiar question. Of course members of many groups that have been treated unequally are agents much of the time, but also victims, in the sense of objects of discrimination, some of the time. The point of a movement for equality is not to wallow in victimhood, but to ensure that people are not made victims, as they sometimes are, by virtue of a morally irrelevant characteristic, such as race or gender.

The constitutional question should not be confused with the policy issue, and Strossen does the Constitution no service by offering absolutist claims about the First Amendment that she cannot defend. But the fundamental weakness of this book has little to do with law. Its fundamental weakness is that it celebrates sexuality (apparently all kinds) and pornography (apparently all kinds, too), and proceeds as if all these celebrations involve exactly the same thing.

CASS R. SUNSTEIN is author of *Democracy and the Problem of Free Speech* (The Free Press).

GRAND CHENIER DIARIST

The Trojan Goose

EVERY OTHER YEAR OR SO DURING Christmas vacation I stuff myself into a camouflaged suit of goose down and rubber and strike out with my father and a few of his friends into the swamps of southwestern Louisiana. For nearly twenty years now I have followed him into the darkness as blindly as Isaac followed Abraham, to stalk waterfowl through a gauntlet of pricker bushes, sawgrass, quickmud, snakes, mosquitoes, wild dogs, alligators and even the odd hostile cow. After each incursion into this intrusive place I scrape the mud out of unlikely crannies, anoint 1,000 improbable mosquito bites and put myself to bed with the flu, where I relive that morning's startling sensation of a water moccasin curling itself around my leg in the dark.

BECAUSE EVERYTHING IN THE Louisiana swamp seems slightly unhinged and unpredictable, it seems almost natural there that, for example, the common cow would charge an armed man as fiercely as the rabbit charged Jimmy Carter, and force him to chose between humiliating death and the indignity of shooting a cow in self-defense. (The one time it happened the man chose life.) From year to year, the very ground of the swamp shifts from place to place: what last year was a spit of land is now a muddy pond; what last year was a muddy pond is now a bed of lilies; and so why shouldn't a Cajun cow become a Minotaur? But of all the life in the swamp, nothing is quite so transformed by the place as the otherwise intelligent human being in pursuit of the elusive waterfowl. I suppose I should say that I see nothing immoral in this, though I often have sensed mild disapproval in people who do not hunt of people who do. As they slice deeply into the flesh of what once was an adorable little lamb, and then tear it greedily with their back teeth, these people will say something like "How can you kill a cute little duck?" The honest answer is, sadly, that I don't.

LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW I BELIEVE we began two decades ago with the ambition of one day becoming purists. The hunting purist is able to make him-

self think and feel like a duck or a goose. He enters the swamp at 5:00 in the morning with ten shotgun shells and returns three hours later with his legal limit of three ducks and seven geese. He can carve wooden ducks so similar to live ducks that even ducks don't notice the difference, and make noises with his mouth that sound so much like a female duck on the make that male ducks flock to him like sailors to a brothel. I confess, there was a time when this seemed important to us, and some of my earliest memories are of my father sitting on our back porch imitating for hours a taped recording of duck mating calls.

BUT OVER THE years it became clear that no matter how long we practiced this interspecies flirtation we would never score. As this truth dawned, we began busily to fill the gap between our ambitions and our talents with the latest in hunting technology. Unable to speak with the birds we communicated instead with each other. We carried walkie-talkies so that we might fan out in the swamp and relay to each other various duck data; we carried flares to better see each other in the dark. And then there were the more adventurous techniques. In the late 1970s it was widely believed, for example, that to a goose flying high in the sky, a balled-up newspaper resembled a sitting goose. For several years we spread *The Wall Street Journal* across the Louisiana wetlands, fully believing that a goose would spot the stock quotes, or perhaps an opera review, and dive down for a closer look. After a while, when we had nothing to show for this but a soggy mess, we moved on from newspapers to life-size plastic replicas of geese. When these also failed, another theory soon made the rounds: geese lacked size perception. A goose the size of the World Trade Center looked, to a goose, like another goose. And so for the next several years our plastic replicas of the geese swelled to three or four times the size of a live goose. The added size did not help, as far as I could see.

AS I RECALL, WE BEGAN TO FEEL that instead of waiting for the goose to come to us, we must go to the goose. The trick was to sneak up on him as he lay innocently feeding in his rice paddy. This was known as "creeping." (It must be effective, for a new law against it has been passed in Louisiana. It is known as the Goose Creeping Regulation, and reads: "It shall be unlawful to approach

geese by creeping, crawling or stalking for the purpose of taking geese or thereafter causing geese to be taken.") Only now do I understand that our many beliefs about geese would lead us inevitably to embrace the Trojan Goose. The Trojan Goose was advertised by one of the many companies that specialize in supplying frustrated hunters with high technology. It was, as it sounds, a hollowed out replica of a goose, complete with eye holes, large enough for two hunters to stand comfortably inside of it. It was meant to be erected in the middle of a goose feeding ground. One wing disguised a kind of trapdoor.



The idea was that once the geese gathered around their gargantuan cousin the hunters might throw open the trapdoor, storm out into their unsuspecting midst and visit death and destruction upon many wild beasts. Just moments before we purchased the Trojan

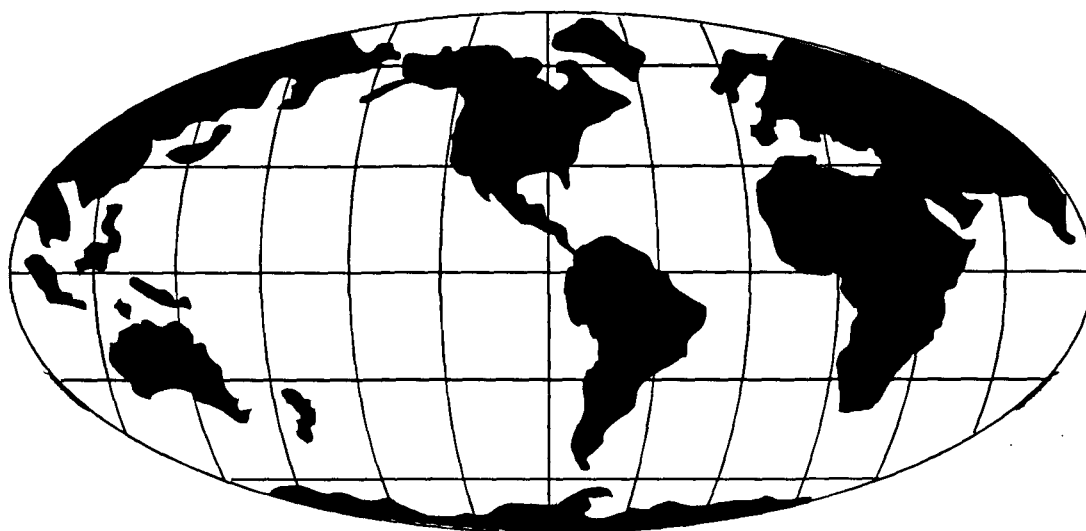
Goose, however, something happened—I'm not sure what. Perhaps some combination of self-revulsion and self-examination. At heart, we realized, we were not technologists. We were spiritualists.

THE SPIRITUALIST IS THE HUNTER who has learned to shift the emphasis of hunting away from the killing. He knows he can shiver ducklessly for hours behind a clump of marsh grass expertly imitating a pintail's whistle or a mallard drake's quack, with a textbook perfect semicircle of decoys at his front and the wind and the sunrise at his back. Then, the moment he deserts his position to answer a call of nature, the ducks will descend like Japanese Zeroes. Looking like a cross between a flasher and an advertisement for the National Rifle Association, he will lurch for his gun and go down with a small splash as the ducks exit safely, chuckling lightly.

WE HAVE COME VERY FAR IN THESE twenty years. A few weeks ago my father set off one morning on foot through the swamp. He came through a clearing and walked into several acres of ducks and geese feeding on the ground. They continued to feed while he watched. It was the largest collection of potential victims ever to sit quietly within the range of a Lewis gun. He might have murdered a flock, had he been that sort of hunter. Instead, he stood in awe and watched until they all flew away.

MICHAEL LEWIS

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